

al majdal



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Overcoming the Ongoing Nakba

BDS & the Global Anti-Apartheid Movement

BADIL takes a rights-based approach to the Palestinian refugee issue through research, advocacy, and support of community participation in the search for durable solutions.

BADIL was established in 1998 to support the development of a popular refugee lobby for Palestinian refugee and internally displaced rights and is registered as a non-profit organization with the Palestinian Authority.

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Back Cover: "Not for Sale" - Winning Poster of Badil's 2008 Al-Awda Award by Ashraf Ghayib (Beit Lahiya, Occupied Gaza).

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Overcoming the Nakba

This year, the 60th since the establishment of Israel through the systematic forced transfer of most of Palestine's indigenous population, has witnessed the largest global mobilization in support of Palestinian rights since the 1948 Nakba. In cities around the world, supporters of human rights and just peace participated in actions and events demanding that the truth of the Nakba be exposed and calling for the implementation of Palestinian refugee rights. Many of these actions and events were part of the emerging global movement to reverse, and not just commemorate, the 60-year Nakba, through boycott, divestment and sanctions



60 Years of Nakba by Carlos Latuff.

(BDS) campaigns against Israel until it fully complies with its obligations under international law and universal human rights and dismantles its regime of apartheid, colonialism and occupation. This issue of *al-Majdal* brings together the voices of BDS activists from around the world to describe and evaluate their campaigns to date.

The current BDS campaign is deeply rooted in the century-old history of Palestinian civil resistance against Zionist colonization. In the two decades before the establishment of the state of Israel, the Palestinian national movement had implemented a local boycott of Zionist enterprises that escalated during the uprising of 1936-1939. After 1948, member states of the League of Arab States, Non-Aligned Movement, and Organization of the Islamic Conference launched state-run boycott campaigns to ensure that commercial and financial relations with Israel did not take place, a boycott that began to be reversed under US pressure when Egypt signed the Camp David Accords and other Arab states engaged in the normalization treaties of the 1990s. Anti-normalization, a term that describes opposition to the treatment of Israel as a 'normal state' given its abnormal regime of apartheid, colonialism and occupation, became a central slogan of civil society in Arab countries that initiated relations with Israel, as well as in Palestine after the Oslo agreements.

Western governments, under the leadership of the US and the EU, threw their weight behind breaking the boycott over the past 15 years, and economic normalization with Israel became a condition of any bilateral trade agreement between Arab states and the US. Normalization with Israel is central to the US vision for the region, exemplified by the US goal of a Middle East Free Trade Agreement (MEFTA) that is to be achieved by the year 2013.

The current BDS movement, which began to take form with the outbreak of the Second Intifada in 2000 and evolved into a coherent strategy with the broad 2005 Palestinian Civil Society Call for BDS, is an extension of the previous boycott and anti-normalization campaigns. It is set apart, however, by several differences, primary among which is the fact that, for the first time,

BDS has become central also in the Western solidarity movement, with emerging regional and global coordination mechanisms. As a result, it has become a far-reaching grassroots campaign that involves people from all walks of life, rather than being limited to state-driven initiatives.

A second and related difference is the analysis of Israel as an apartheid regime which has become widespread in the BDS movement. This analysis triggers memories of the struggle against the South African apartheid regime and the boycott campaign against it, and plays a positive role in galvanizing popular energies. At least as important is the fact that apartheid is a crime, which is clearly and legally defined in the *International Convention on the Repression of the Crime of Apartheid*. Commission of this crime creates an obligation on states to condemn and prevent its occurrence and ensure reparation for the victims.

The international community, including the United Nations, have so far abstained from applying the Convention to Israel's regime, while the analysis of the solidarity movement has remained focused on its manifestations, i.e. on differences and similarities in the ways Israel's regime plays out in oppressing the Palestinian people as compared to the forms of oppression employed by South Africa during political Apartheid. In this context, the Durban Review process launched by the United Nations in 2008 in order to improve the *Declaration and Programme of Action for the Combating of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance* adopted by the 2001 World Conference against Racism in Durban provides a unique opportunity for deepening the legal analysis of Israel's regime and state obligations deriving therefrom. A preliminary legal analysis of the applicability of the crime of apartheid to Israel's regime over the Palestinian people is included in this issue of *al-Majdal* in order to stimulate further analysis and debate.

The UN Durban Review Process and Conference (20 – 24 April 2009)

The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action provides an important conceptual framework for the analysis of root causes and the search for a just, comprehensive and lasting solution of the protracted conflict over Palestine.

The principles adopted by the 2001 World Conference against Racism for the combat of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance are based on international law, in particular the International Convention for Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) and other human rights treaties, and include the following:

- The principles of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, stressing that states must protect such equality as a matter of highest priority (preamble);
- Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance constitute a negation of the purpose and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and are among the root causes of many internal and international conflicts, including armed conflicts (preamble, para 20);
- Colonialism has led to racism and racial discrimination; the suffering caused by colonialism must be acknowledged and it is to be condemned and its re-occurrence prevented (para 14, 99);
- No derogation from the prohibition of racial discrimination, genocide, the crime of apartheid and slavery is permitted (preamble); apartheid and genocide constitute crimes against humanity and are major sources and manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance; wherever and whenever they occurred, they must be condemned and their re-occurrence prevented (para 15);
- The fact that in some states political and legal structures or institutions constitute an important factor of discrimination in the exclusion of indigenous peoples is a matter of concern (para 22);
- Victims of human rights violations resulting from racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance should be ensured access to justice and effective protection and remedies, including just and adequate reparation or satisfaction for any damage suffered as a result of such discrimination;
- States and the international community should honor the memory of the victims of slavery, apartheid, colonialism and genocide; remembering and teaching about the facts and truth of the history, causes, nature and consequences of past crimes or wrongs are essential elements for international reconciliation and the creation of societies based on justice, equality and solidarity (para 98, 99, 106).
- The urgency of addressing the root causes of displacement and of finding durable solutions for refugees and displaced persons, in particular voluntary return in safety and dignity to the countries of origin, as well as resettlement in third countries and local integration, when and where appropriate and feasible" (para 54).

Palestinian civil society welcomes the invitation of the United Nations for a review of the 2001 Durban Declaration and Programme of Action with the aim of assessing and enhancing them and has launched preparation of a civil society position paper in the framework of the Palestinian BDS National Committee.

This issue of *al-Majdal* includes assessments of BDS campaigns across Europe, North America and South Africa which raise a number of notable points regarding weaknesses and strengths of the movement. In many countries, BDS campaigns have provided a space for the creativity and energies of the diverse Palestine solidarity efforts to coalesce. As such, BDS-initiatives have played an important unifying role. The persistence with which many countries of Europe and North America provide political and economic support to the state of Israel, illustrated by the recent EU decision to upgrade relations, and the fact that the Palestinian leadership (PLO, PA) remains tied-up in political negotiations with Israel in meaningless diplomatic process have, however, played a detracting role that has undermined BDS efforts in many countries.

Another notable characteristic of the campaigns is their diversity which, in some ways, has been an advantage: it has allowed campaigners to focus energies on their strengths, with anyone and everyone able to play a role. Countries in which BDS activists are connected with the local labor movements, for example, focus energies on trade unions, while those where social-justice-oriented political parties exist, focus their efforts on lobbying parliaments and government policy. Diversity, however, also poses many challenges, including a lack of coherence of the legal and political analysis and the strategy for choosing targets on a global level. One manifestation of this, for example, is that activists worldwide still lack consensus about whether to focus their campaigns against Israel's military occupation regime in the 1967 occupied Palestinian territory (often characterized by a focus on settlement products, and referred to as 'selective boycott') or the Israeli regime in its entirety, the latter being the position of the Palestinian BDS movement and the spirit of the 2005 BDS Call. Irrespective of the consensus in Palestine about the strategic importance of a coordinated boycott of Israeli sports, moreover, only sporadic actions have so far been accomplished on this front. The choice of other targets often appears to be arbitrary and efforts scattered; several campaigns have been launched for the boycott of Israeli diamonds, the Jewish National Fund, Eden Springs, Israeli arms trade, Caterpillar, and others, but these campaigns have not been sustained or coordinated. Signs of better coordination have appeared recently with the dynamic campaign against the global enterprise of Lev Leviev, an Israeli multimillionaire involved in settlement construction, the diamond trade, and other oppressive business.

A landmark achievement for the global campaign has been the formation of a Palestinian reference-point by the Palestinian civil society organizations signatories to the 2005 BDS Call. The Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC) emerged from the November 2007 BDS national conference in Ramallah, and includes as members all major movements, unions, networks and associations that make up Palestinian civil society. The central aim of the BNC is to deepen the involvement of the Palestinian people in the campaign and provide Palestinian support and resources for campaigners worldwide. One of the recent achievements of the BNC has been the launch of a central website – BDSmovement.net – to serve global coordination of the campaign until Israel complies with international law.

The articles included in this issue of *al-Majdal* provide only a sample of BDS activity actually taking place worldwide. We hope, however, that the reflections shared by activists in various countries will be of use for assessing the way forward towards a Palestine without apartheid, colonization and occupation, a Palestine characterized by freedom and justice for all of its people, regardless of their nationality, race, ethnicity or religion.

Corrections to previous issue:

*Page 18: footnote 7 is a reference is to: Walid al-Khalidi, *Before their Diaspora, Beirut*: Institute for Palestine Studies, 3rd Edition, 2004.

*Page 21: Photo incorrectly captioned. The action in the photograph is of a diverse group of Palestine solidarity activists from Birthright Unplugged, Boston Coalition, and Middle East Crisis Committee disrupting the "New England Celebrates Israel" event in Boston, MA. The hidden T-shirts and banners when unfurled attested to the Nakba and made a huge impact on the event.

*Page 26: Author Rawan Al-Bash was born in 1975.

*Page 36: Photo incorrectly captioned. The village in the photograph is Saffuriyya.

Gaza: A Refugee's Perspective

Dr. As'ad Abu Sharkh

As Israel celebrates the 60th year since its establishment, the Palestinian people commemorate the 60th year of the Nakba (catastrophe) in which Zionist forces drove out the majority of the Palestinian people from Palestine, deprived them of their homes, lands and property and turned them into destitute refugees. The expulsion of the majority of Palestinians from their homes and replacing them by Jews from various parts of the world over the past 60 years has been a premeditated crime concocted deliberately by the Zionist movement whose ideology continues to be based on the war crime of population transfer aimed at simultaneously pumping out the indigenous Palestinian population and pumping in Jews from the world to create and maintain a Jewish state on the land of Palestine.



Blockade of Gaza by Carlos Latuff

This is an implementation of the Zionist slogan “a land without people to a people without land.” Advocates of justice have often highlighted this slogan to emphasize the myths on which the state of Israel was formed (the myth of the empty land). In practice, the slogan is more indicative of the goals and aspirations of Zionism: to forcibly recreate the land as one empty of its indigenous population; goals and aspirations which Israel has systematically sought to realize through all of its political, economic, diplomatic and military might. Nowhere is this clearer than the place in which I live: Gaza.

The Gaza strip is a narrow piece of land along the coast of the Mediterranean sea. An area that is no more than 40km long and 10km wide, it is currently home to around 1.5 million Palestinians. The shape of this territory was defined by the armistice agreement between Egypt and Israel following the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 on well over 78% of Palestine, and the mass expulsion of the majority of indigenous Palestinians by the Zionist militias of the time. These militias aimed to create in Palestine a state for “Jews, all Jews and only Jews” in the words of Herzl.

The majority of the Gaza strip’s inhabitants are refugees whose families were uprooted and driven out of their homes to live in the wilderness. These refugees, who are from towns and villages in the costal and southern parts of Palestine, now total well over one million living in eight refugees camps in the Gaza strip. As such, two out of every three people in Gaza is a refugee, and one out of every seven displaced Palestinians lives in Gaza.

I am one of these refugees in Gaza. My family was expelled from al-Majdal. On the eve of its destruction, al-Majdal was a bustling coastal town of just under 11,500 people, and the place after which this publication is named. The vast majority of my townspeople were forced out by Israeli aerial and marine bombardment as part of Operation Yoav in November 1948, while many of those who were able to stay were later driven out through a combination of military force and administrative measures under the Israeli Emergency Laws that targeted Palestinian citizens of the newly established state. Since then, thousands of newly arrived Jewish immigrants were settled in al-Majdal under its new name: Ashkelon, while the original

inhabitants ended up only a few miles away in the refugee camps of the Gaza Strip. In 1967, Israel continued its onslaught, and militarily occupied Gaza, as well as the West Bank, Sinai the Golan Heights and parts of southern Lebanon.

We refugees have not accepted the sixty-year Zionist takeover of our towns and villages, and actually, like the rest of the Palestinian people, never condoned the very *raison d'être* of the Zionist state at our own expense. We refugees have actively participated, sometimes exclusively, in every step of the Palestinian struggle against Israeli apartheid, colonialism, and occupation. As refugees still living in occupied Palestine, we are the ones who have faced all three of these regimes, described by John Dugard as anathema to the international system: Israel's apartheid regime is what prevents our return, the villages to which we want and have the right to return to have been colonized, and our place of refuge is under the brutal military occupation. It should come as no surprise then that the Second Intifada, like the first one, started off in Gaza, and that the leaders and the rank-and-file activists who rose up in these uprisings are mainly the second or third generation of the Palestinian refugees.

This is significant enough as a message to the Israelis that those descendants of 1948 refugees have not forgotten and will not forget our towns and villages, and that we still know that those are the places to which we truly belong. This is not a welcome message in Tel Aviv and, compounded with the fact that the spirit of refugee resistance is the culture of Gaza, has formed the main context of Israeli policy towards this coastal cage. Stated plainly, the central aim of Israeli political and military strategy in Gaza is to eliminate the resistance and the existence of Palestinian refugees struggling to return.

Israeli Massacres in Gaza

29 August 1948: Arab Suqfir Massacre

"Another case happened in Ashdod [the name of an Israeli settlement where Arab Suqfir used to stand]. Towards the end of August 1948, the Giv'ati Brigade executed the 'Cleansing Campaign' (Mivtza Nikayon) in Ashdod's dunes. This happened after the forced landing of an Israeli plane in the area and the killing" of... eight passengers by locals. A company of mounted cavalry, jeeps and Giv'ati fighters went to comb the area. In the course of this action, and according to a conservative estimate, ten farmers.. were murdered. [Israeli Historian] Yitzhki says that evidence about that can be found in the campaign chronicle of Giv'ati in the IDF archives and in the second chapter of the book on the Giv'ati Brigade." (From Walid Khalidi, *All that Remains*, Beirut: Institute of Palestinian Studies, p.80-81).

28 August 1953: Bureij Refugee Camp Massacre

"[Israeli Commando Unit 101 under the command of Ariel Sharon was] cornered in al-Bureij refugee camp. He decided they would bomb and shoot their way through the camp rather than retreat from it. General Vagn Bennike, the Danish UN Truce Chief, reported to the Security Council on the ensuing massacre: "Bombs were thrown through the windows of huts in which the refugees were sleeping and, as they fled, they were attacked by small arms and automatic weapons. The casualties were 20 killed, 27 seriously wounded, and 35 less seriously wounded." Other sources estimate from 15 to 50 fatalities. The Israeli army blamed the raid on rogue kibbutzniks, and Ariel Sharon tried to reassure his men, telling them that all the dead women were camp whores or murderous Palestinian infiltrators. But some of them remained shocked at what they had done. Participant Meir Barbut said they felt as if they were slaughtering the pathetic inhabitants of a Jewish transit camp: "The boys threw Molotov cocktails at [innocent] people, not at the saboteurs we had come to punish. It was shameful for the 101 and the IDF [Israel army]." Another asked, "Is this screaming, whimpering multitude ... the enemy? ... How did these fellahin sin against us?" (From: Jim Holstun, "Nonie Darwish and the al-Bureij massacre," *The Electronic Intifada*, 26 June 2008).

5 April 1956: Gaza City Massacre

"...Israeli major ordered fire by 120-mm. mortars on Gaza. A heavy fire was poured in, centered on the middle of the town, full of civilians about their ordinary business. Fifty-six Arabs were killed and 103 wounded, men, women, and children. The unjustifiable savagery of this retaliation shocked the Israeli authorities, I believe. It seems to have been due to the bad judgment, to use the mildest possible phrase, of a local commander. But the Israeli Army tried to offer the excuse that their mortars were firing at military objectives. Unfortunately for this contention, the UN observers were able to investigate the occurrence before the mortar-shells had ceased falling, and the location of the hits was promptly plotted. It showed the "mean point of impact" right in the middle of the town, in the principal square, while the Egyptian mortars were upwards of two kilometers away, somewhere near Ali Muntar." (From: E.L.M. Burns (General in the Canadian Military), *Between Arab and Israeli*, London: George G. Harrap & Co., 1962, pp. 140-141. Reprinted Beirut: Institute of Palestinian Studies, 1969).

3 November 1956: Khan Yunis Massacre

"Israelis occupy the town of Khan Yunis and the adjacent refugee camp. The Israelis claim that there was resistance, but the refugees state that all

The way that Israel has worked towards this goal of eliminating the refugees and their resistance in Gaza has been described by Israeli historian Ilan Pappé as genocidal. This is an accurate description given Israeli policy and practice with regards to this tiny strip of land, a central feature of which is segregation through confinement. Since the mid-1990s, Gaza has been completely sealed off with the Israeli controlled sea on one side, and Israeli controlled barriers on the other three sides. For the past year, Egypt has officially controlled the Rafah border between Gaza and Egypt, but this has not meant any lenience with regards to the segregation policy. As a result, Gaza is essentially the world's largest open air prison, a fact reiterated by John Dugard in his now famous statement that "Gaza is a prison and Israel seems to have thrown away the key." The confinement extends even to Palestinians in critical health conditions requiring treatment outside of Gaza who are systematically denied exit. The death of 10-month old Waseem Hamdan on 18 July 2008 brought the number of patients who died as a result of exit denial to 211, almost a quarter of whom have been children.

The second feature of Israeli policy *vis-à-vis* Gaza has been isolation through the siege of Gaza. Israel has used its control over entry and exit into and out of the area to collectively punish the people of Gaza since 2006 (purportedly because the majority of Palestinians in the occupied territories voted freely in a democratic election that Israel and its US backers had demanded) by not allowing any of the most basic and essential needs into Gaza. The disastrous humanitarian situation that has resulted, including the use of cooking oil instead of petroleum that has poisoned the air, the dumping of sewage into the sea that has made it dangerous to swim in, the rampant poverty as a result of job-loss, and innumerable aspects of the misery in Gaza are written about elsewhere, and constitute one of the most cruel crimes committed by any state ever.

resistance had ceased when the Israelis arrived and that all of the victims were unarmed civilians. Many homes in Khan Yunis are raided at random. Corpses lie everywhere and because of the curfew no one could go out to bury them. (An UNRWA investigation later found that the Israelis at Khan Yunis and the refugee camp had murdered 275 civilians that day). After the Israelis withdrew from Gaza under American pressure, a mass grave was unearthed at Khan Yunis in March 1957. The grave contained the bodies of forty Arabs who had been shot in the back of the head after their hands had been tied." (From: Michael Palumbo, *Imperial Israel*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1990, pp. 30 - 32).

12 November 1956: Rafah Refugee Camp, Gaza Strip

"On November 12, a serious incident happened in the Agency's [UNRWA] camp at Rafah. ... A difference of opinion exists as to how the incident happened and as to the numbers of killed and wounded. ... It is agreed, however, that the incident occurred during a screening operation conducted by the Israel forces ... to find persons who were members of the so-called 'Palestine Brigade' or who participated in fedayeen operations.... Sufficient time was not allowed for all men to walk to the screening-points and get there before the designated hour. In the confusion, a large number of refugees ran toward the screening-points for fear of being late, and some Israel soldiers apparently panicked and opened fire on this running crowd. ... The Director [Henry Labouisse, Director-General of the UNRWA] has received from sources he considers trustworthy lists of names of persons alleged killed at Rafah on 12 November, numbering 111." (From E.L.M. Burns, *Between Arab and Israeli*, London: George G. Harrap & Co., 1962, p. 304)

June 1967: Rafah Refugee Camp, Gaza Strip

"In Gaza, according to UNRWA sources that I believe to be reliable, 144 inhabited houses in a refugee camp were bulldozed in a single night, and a recent communal grave in the camp that was excavated under UNRWA supervision contained 23 bodies." (From: David Holden, article in the *Sunday Times* (London) dated November 19, 1967)

9 June 2006: Gaza Beach Massacre

An Israeli naval boat stationed off the coast of Beit Lahya fired seven successive artillery shells at civilians on the beach in the Waha area, north of Beit Lahya. The shells landed on the beach, which had been crowded with men, women and children at the time. Seven civilians from the same family (father, mother and five children) were killed. A further thirty-two civilians, including thirteen children, were injured. Two of the injured sustained serious wounds. On 13 June, another attack was carried out on a Gaza highway, killing eleven and injuring thirty. On 20 June, three Palestinian children were killed and 15 others wounded in a failed extra-judicial execution attempt carried out by Israel.

8 November 2006 - Massacre in Beit Hanoun

"Eighteen Palestinian civilians, most of them women and children from the same family, were killed... as they tried to flee a barrage of Israeli artillery shells fired on and around the house where they had been sleeping minutes earlier. The victims were killed by an estimated 10 to 12 155mm shells which landed on Beit Hanoun less than 24 hours after troops had ended a six-day ground incursion into the northern Gaza town aimed at stopping militants firing Qassam rockets into Israel. All but one of the dead were members of the Athamneh family and included six children under 16. They were killed when they rushed out into the dirt road beside their four-storey building after the first shell struck, punching a hole two feet in diameter through the roof. Large puddles in the road were still dark with blood five hours after the attack." (From: Donald Macintyre, "Gaza children cannot escape as Israel mounts its bloodiest attack in months," *The Independent*, Nov 9, 2006).



Israeli settlers in Gaza calling for the starving of Palestinians in Gaza.
 Photo by Tsafir Abayov.

The third feature of Israel's genocidal policy in Gaza has been continuous military assault, with the threat of more deadly assaults constantly looming in Israeli political discourse. From 'Operation First Rain' in 2005 and 2006, to 'Operation Summer Rain' after the capture of Gilad Shalit in the summer of 2006, to 'Operation Autumn Clouds' in the Fall of 2006, to the present; hundreds of Palestinians have been killed and thousands injured directly as a result of military assaults.

Although the original Palestinian inhabitants of Gaza suffer and resist like the rest of us, it is fact that by traumatizing, starving, and killing the Palestinians of Gaza, Israel is effectively trying to eliminate one million out of the seven million Palestinian refugees demanding to

return to their homes and properties. In a trend that has become common Israeli practice, Israel is trying to hide or remove the evidence of one crime, the population transfer of over 800,000 Palestinians in 1948, by committing another crime, the Gaza genocide.

While the steadfastness of the people in Gaza tries to announce to the world that we people of Gaza still exist in the face of Israel's war machine, only through international and internal pressure on Israel can this genocide be averted. As it stands, the current situation is one of certain unnatural death: whether from an Israeli bomb, from breathing in toxic fumes, from drinking poisoned water, from lack of essential life-sustaining supplies, from the factional in-fighting that stems from Israeli-US policy of divide and conquer, or from the stress and trauma of just living here. Even if the siege and its associated genocidal regime are lifted today, it will take years for us to recover. The one thing that is clear is that it must stop, and that Israel will not voluntarily stop unless forced to do so. The one path that we have all called for as Palestinians to stop, not just the genocide in Gaza, but the implementation of apartheid, colonialism and occupation throughout Palestine is boycotts, divestment and sanctions on Israel.

Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide

Adopted by Resolution 260 (III) A of the United Nations General Assembly on 9 December 1948

Article 2

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Article 4

Persons committing genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in article III shall be punished, whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials or private individuals.

**Dr. As'ad Abu Sharkh is a Professor of Linguistics at Al-Azhar University in Gaza. He is a second generation Palestinian Refugee from the Palestinian town of al-Majdal on which Israel built the city of Ashkelon.*

Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Online

By the Palestinian BDS National Committee*

On 9 July 2008, the Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC) launched a major new online resource for the campaign for boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel. **BDSmovement.net** will bring together news, campaign materials and resources from Palestinian and global activists in a single site to support, coordinate, and provide information, updates and analysis about the international BDS movement.

It has been three years since over 170 Palestinian organizations, movements, parties and unions came together on 9 July 2005 to launch the unified Palestinian civil society Call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions, offering a new way forward to challenge Israel's multiple forms of colonial and racist oppression of Palestine's indigenous people. Since it was issued, the Call has reverberated throughout the solidarity movement. BDS initiatives have been gradually and persistently spreading all over the world and BDS has become a key tactic for solidarity with the Palestinian people.

BDSmovement.net draws on the full range of actions and initiatives, to bring together Palestinian and international actors striving to strengthen the movement. As a shared space for the exchange of ideas and experiences, it gives an overview of the Palestinian calls for BDS, the myriad local initiatives and online resources, and a wide range of background information and analyses.

At the center of the site is the Palestinian BDS Call, which has proven to be a watershed for the Palestine solidarity movement worldwide. This call has guided the movement by promoting effective, context-sensitive and proven pressure tactics that people around the world can adopt creatively to contribute to the cause of just peace in Palestine and the region. According to the Call, Israel is to be isolated "until Israel meets its obligation to recognize the Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination and fully complies with the precepts of international law by:

1. Ending its 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."

The BNC, which is drawn from the major Palestinian political and social forces, mass organizations and unions, was formed to serve as the Palestinian reference and coordination point for the BDS and anti-normalization movement. Its statements will be published on the site, to set the agenda for the ongoing campaign. The site, which reflects the diversity of the global BDS movement working within the framework of the Palestinian Call, will promote a range of diverse approaches taken up internationally. The BNC believes that this website can help bridge the geographical and political distances between BDS activists to find common ground for global action. The unified Palestinian Call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions forms the backbone of the site's editorial policy.



BDS poster of the Birzeit University Student Committee to Support Local Production. The poster reads: "Freedom is choice, so what do you choose? Don't support the siege on yourself."

Virginia Satstedy of the South African Palestine Solidarity Campaign speaking at the November 2007 BDS conference in Ramallah out which the BNC was formed. Photos by Tinneke D'Haese.



We are closely working with other website initiatives for BDS around the world to ensure that the site brings the efforts together, instead of fragmenting the movement and its resources. The International Coordination Network on Palestine (ICNP) has endorsed the site as a tool to support efforts of networking and coordination. The website content will be developed and updated by activists and organizations in Palestine and around the world. Palestinian groups will provide updates on work in Palestine and the diaspora. Global activists will contribute news and share information on BDS tactics. Special sections have been developed for trade unions and faith based groups. The BNC urges activists globally to support the site by linking to it, publishing the RSS, and sharing information about BDS actions and initiatives for publication on the site. There is already an extensive ‘activist material’ section to support global BDS initiatives.

BDSmovement.net needs to constantly grow and develop. Different language sections are currently under construction; sections detailing the corporations and companies that support the Israeli occupation are under development. We are hoping that the site will develop into a space where we can identify the targets for BDS on an ongoing basis. The BDS campaign is developing rapidly, and we need the input of Palestinian and global activists to ensure that the site is responsive to the needs of the initiatives developed on the ground.

Thank you to the many BDS activists from Europe, the Americas, South Africa and Asia who have contributed with ideas, comments and suggestions to the framework of the site. A special thank you has to be given to the group of Indian and other solidarity activists who contributed financially and volunteered months of hard work to make this website a reality and the Palestinian grassroots Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign for taking the initiative to develop the site.

* Member organizations of the BNC include:	Coalition for Jerusalem
Council of National and Islamic Forces in Palestine	General Union of Palestinian Workers
Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU)	Palestinian NGO Network (PNGO)
Federation of Independent Trade Unions	Union of Arab Community Based Associations (ITTIJAH)
Palestine Right of Return Coalition	Occupied Palestine and Golan Heights Advocacy Initiative (OPGAI)
General Union of Palestinian Women	Union of Palestinian Farmers
Grassroots Palestinian Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign (STW)	Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI)
National Committee to Commemorate the Nakba	Civic Coalition for the Defense of Palestinian Rights in Jerusalem (CCDPRJ)

Visit BDSmovement.net and sign up to the Palestinian Call for BDS to pledge your support to the ongoing campaign to isolate Israeli apartheid.

Applicability of the Crime of Apartheid to Israel

by Karine Mac Allister

Apartheid is an Afrikaans term for “apartness,” which means to “separate,” to “put apart,” to “segregate.” It can be summed up as the institutionalization of a regime of systematic racial discrimination or more precisely, “a political system where racism is regulated in law through acts of parliament.”¹

Discussions on whether Israel is guilty of the crime of apartheid are not new; numerous articles were published in the 1980s and 1990s concluding that the situation in Israel and to some extent the occupied Palestinian territory (OPT) is one of apartheid.² These discussions were, however, sidelined by the Madrid-Oslo process in the mid-1990s, which was widely expected to bring about at least partial self-determination of the Palestinian people in the OPT. Discussions on the applicability of the apartheid label to Israel have recently re-emerged, mainly as a result of the entrenchment of Israel’s regime of occupation and colonization in the OPT and its continued discriminatory policies towards Palestinian refugees and citizens of Israel.³

While several political and historical comparisons between Israel and South Africa have been published, there has been no systematic legal analysis of Israeli apartheid as it affects all sectors of Palestinian society: Palestinians in the occupied territory, Palestinian citizens of Israel, and Palestinian refugees. This article is a work in progress which aims to provide a legal framework within which the applicability of the

crime of apartheid to Israel can be discussed. It argues that the policies and practices of the Israeli government amount to apartheid against Palestinian nationals - wherever they are and whatever their legal status. Hence, Palestinian citizens of Israel, refugees, and those in the OPT are victims, albeit in different ways, of Israel’s regime of apartheid.

While this article is limited to the applicability of the crime of apartheid, it does not negate nor contradict the fact that Israel’s regime against the Palestinian people is also one of belligerent occupation and colonialism. Indeed, Israel’s obligations as an occupying power in the OPT, in particular to end its belligerent occupation and withdraw from the occupied territory, are not affected by the applicability of the crime of apartheid; to the contrary, they are heightened, as are the obligations of the



"I am Palestinian", by Carlos Latuff

international community. Hence, victims of the crime of apartheid, Palestinians are not only protected civilians in the OPT, but also a people – i.e., Palestinian nationals - victims of gross violations of international human rights law (i.e., apartheid and colonialism) and entitled to reparations, including return, restitution, compensation, and satisfaction.

Colonialism, the “subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation”⁴ is thus core to any analysis of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The conflict is colonial because it is rooted in political Zionism which aims to Judaize Palestine by creating a Jewish majority over Mandate Palestine – or more expansively, *Eretz Israel*.⁵ At the heart of Zionism is thus an exclusivist project: the creation of a Jewish state for the Jewish people. Such a project involves or necessitates the denial of the other; of their presence, rights and existence on the land and reconstruction of the past, namely that the land was empty before the advent of Zionist settlement, hence the movement’s slogan describing “a land without people for a people without land.”⁶ In its practical implementation, Zionism translates into a sophisticated legal, social, economic and political regime of racial discrimination that has led to colonialism and apartheid as well as the dispossession and displacement of the Palestinian people. In this sense, apartheid - the separation of the indigenous people from their lands on the one hand, and from Jewish Israelis on the other – permits the colonial enterprise that is inherent to political Zionism.

The Crime of Apartheid under International Law

Apartheid violates a *jus cogens* norm of international law and is a crime against humanity.⁷ Central to the definition of



Israel's Separation wall in Qalqilya, a city in the occupied West Bank completely encircled by the Wall.

apartheid is the *Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid* (hereinafter the Apartheid Convention) which defines apartheid as “*similar policies and practices of racial segregation and discrimination as practiced in southern Africa*” which have “the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one *racial group* of persons over any other racial group of persons and *systematically* oppressing them.” While the Convention is based on the South African experience, it is not limited to it.⁸ In its General Comment, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination further explained that while “the reference to apartheid may have been directed exclusively to South Africa... the article [condemning racial segregation and apartheid] as adopted prohibits all forms of racial segregation in all countries.”⁹

The *Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination* broadly defines *racial discrimination* as “any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.”¹⁰ The Apartheid Convention also defines apartheid as violations of international law perpetrated by one racial group against another in order to obtain and maintain supremacy – or in other terms, “all those activities and practices which are intended to protect the advantages of a dominant group and/or to maintain or widen the unequal position of a subordinate group.”¹¹ Central

to the logic of apartheid is “[disaggregation of] the other along ethnically defined lines so as to divide and rule.”¹² In this sense, apartheid is one of the most severe forms of racism.

The crime of apartheid includes denial of the right to life and liberty, such as murder, serious bodily or mental harm, infringement of freedom or dignity, torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and arbitrary arrest and illegal imprisonment. It also includes the deliberate imposition on a racial group or groups of living conditions calculated to cause its or their physical destruction in whole or in part, exploitation of labor, including forced labor, and persecution of organizations and persons who oppose apartheid.¹³

In addition, apartheid is

“*any legislative measures and other measures* calculated to prevent a racial group or groups from participation in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the country and the deliberate creation of conditions preventing the full development of such a group or groups, in particular by *denying* to members of a racial group or groups basic human rights and freedoms, including the right to work, the right to form recognized trade unions, the right to education, *the right to leave and to return to their country*, the right to a nationality, the right to freedom of movement and residence, the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.”¹⁴

Lastly, apartheid includes

“*any measures, including legislative measures, designed to divide the population along racial lines by the creation of separate reserves and ghettos for the members of a racial group* or groups, the prohibition of mixed marriages among members of various racial groups, *the expropriation of landed property belonging to a racial group* or groups or to members thereof.”¹⁵

Under international humanitarian law, the first Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions also includes as grave breaches “practices of apartheid and other inhuman and degrading practices involving outrages upon personal dignity, based on racial discrimination.”¹⁶

Under international criminal law, apartheid is clearly recognized as a crime against humanity when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against civilian population, i.e., inhumane acts that are massive in scale or result from deliberate and systematic planning. The Rome Statute defines apartheid as inhumane acts “committed in the context of an *institutionalized regime of systematic oppression and domination* by one racial group over any other racial group or groups and committed with the intention of maintaining that regime.” These acts can include deportation or forcible transfer of population, imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of fundamental rules of international law, torture, persecution against any identifiable group or collectivity on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, gender or other grounds that are universally recognized as impermissible under international law and other inhumane acts of a similar character intentionally causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health.”¹⁷

The Apartheid Convention includes one of the most expansive definitions of international criminal jurisdiction and enforcement.¹⁸ The Convention stipulates that “international criminal responsibility shall apply, irrespective of the motive involved, to individuals, members of organizations and institutions and representatives of the State, whether residing in the territory of the State in which the acts are perpetrated or in some other State, whenever they: a) Commit, participate in, directly incite or conspire in the commission of the acts mentioned in article II of the present Convention; b) Directly abet, encourage or co-operate in the commission of the crime of apartheid.”¹⁹ The universal jurisdiction granted by the Convention enables the prosecution of individuals, members of organizations and agents of the state, who can be held criminally liable regardless of their location and their motive, and whether they encourage, cooperate with, or directly commit actions or omissions as part of the crime of apartheid.²⁰

Applicability of the Crime of Apartheid to Israel

Defining Racial Groups

Central to the definition of apartheid is the institutionalized - “legalized” - domination of one racial group over another. An examination of whether the policies and practices of the government of Israel amount to apartheid first requires a definition

what is intended by the term ‘racial group’ and who are the racial groups in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Can we say that Palestinians and Jews are racial groups, and if so, who is included in these groups? Are all the Palestinians and Jews members of a racial group or only a limited number of them?

The concepts of ‘race’ and ‘racial’ have evolved from a biologically-driven definition to one that “stand[s] for historically specific forms of cultural connectedness and solidarity.”²¹ “Race

serves to naturalize the groupings that it identifies in its own name.”²² “While the reality of ‘race’ is indeed neither natural and biological, nor psychological... it does nevertheless exist” because “it does kill people” and “continues to provide the backbone of some ferocious systems of domination.”²³ According to Colette Guillaumin, race is a “legal, political and historical reality which plays a real and constraining role in a number of societies” which explains why “any appeal to race... is a political move.”²⁴

The term ‘ethnic group’ has been defined by Max Weber as “those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration; this belief must be important for group formation; furthermore it does not matter whether an objective blood relationship exists.”²⁵ In some instances, ‘ethnic group’ has replaced or been used interchangeably with ‘racial group’ although this practice is not accepted by all.²⁶ In practice, however, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination uses ‘racial group’ or ‘ethnic group’ interchangeably. Hence the definitions of and differences between a racial and ethnic group are malleable and have blurred. For the purpose of this article, they are used interchangeably based on the assumption that both concepts are constructed identities developed as a result of perceived common cultural, national, religious, descent or biological traits.

The definition of a ‘racial’ or ‘ethnic’ group primarily results from individual self-identification, which requires voluntary and conscious choice. Indeed, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is of the opinion that “the ways in which individuals are identified as being members of a particular racial or ethnic groups... shall, if no justification exists to the contrary, be based upon self-identification by the individual concerned.”²⁷

The victims of apartheid, in the Israeli case, are the Palestinian people, namely persons belonging to the Palestinian nation. For Palestinians, the test is whether they identify themselves as Palestinian nationals. If they do, and regardless of their geographic location or legal status, they constitute one ‘racial’ or ‘ethnic’ group because of their shared identity, which for instance includes a common culture, history and origin. Whether Palestinians are citizens of Israel, refugees and/or protected persons in the OPT is irrelevant, as long as they identify themselves as Palestinians. Hence, Palestinians are an ethno-national group based on their voluntary self-identification as Palestinian nationals.



One of the many checkpoints in the occupied West Bank that operate as part of Israel's illegal mobility restriction regime. ©Anne Paq, 2006.

Administering Apartheid

In addition to one's self-identification, identification with a 'racial' or 'ethnic' group can result from the projected perceptions of 'the other' such as the state or another 'racial' or 'ethnic' group. By projecting or imposing its perceptions of 'the other,' the individual, state or other racial group constructs its identity, and with it the identity of 'the other.' As Richard Jenkins explains, "identity is our understanding of who we are and of who other people are, and reciprocally, other people's understanding of themselves and of others (which include us)."²⁸ In that sense, group or collective identity is not a unilateral process because "all identities (individual and collective) are constituted by the process of internal-external dialectic of identification."²⁹ In the context of an apartheid regime, this identification of 'the other' takes on an added bureaucratic form to facilitate the administration of discriminatory legislation, policy and practice.

In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Palestinians are also racialized through the construction and projection of racial Palestinianization by Zionist Jewish Israelis through the state of Israel. Palestinians are "treated as a racial group, not simply in the manner of a racial group, but as a despised and demonic racial group."³⁰ In contrast, Jewish "Israelis occupy the structural position of whiteness in the racial hierarchy of the Middle East."³¹ On the legal and administrative level, the definition of who is a Palestinian national is for instance imposed through Israeli control of the population registry in Israel and the OPT. This control allows Israel to define who is a Palestinian – namely, a 'non-Jew,' (i.e., Arab), 'absentee' or 'present-absentee.' In Israel, the state has maintained a registry of Palestinians by incorporating the differentiation between 'Jews' and 'Arabs' into the bureaucracy governing its citizens, a differentiation that was clearly marked on the Identity Cards issued by the state to its citizens until 2002.³² The change came not as a result of a desire to end systematic discrimination against Palestinian citizens, but because of disagreements within the Jewish religious establishment of who constitutes a Jew.³³ As a result, citizens' 'nationality' was no longer marked on state-issued ID cards, but Palestinians are still identified as 'Arab' on their birth certificates as well as in the records of the Israeli Ministry of Interior. More simply put, "Israel does not have one single universal citizenship for all of its citizens."³⁴ In the OPT (except Jerusalem³⁵), the military 'civil' administration controls the population registry and ultimately, whether the Palestinian Authority can issue Palestinian ID cards to residents of the OPT. Hence, through laws, practices and policies the state of Israel has established a hierarchy of statuses affecting all Palestinian nationals.

Israel's Hierarchy of Statuses

	Identity	Citizenship/ID	Legal status with regard to their land	Mobility access to land
<i>Status A</i>	Jewish Israelis	Israeli citizenship		No access to Area A in OPT
<i>Status B</i>	Palestinian citizens of Israel	Israeli citizenship		No access to Area A in OPT
<i>Status C</i>	Palestinians IDPs in Israel	Israeli citizenship	present absentee	No access to Area A in OPT
<i>Status D</i>	Palestinian residents of occupied east Jerusalem	Jerusalem ID		Restricted access within OPT
<i>Status E</i>	Palestinian refugees resident in occupied east Jerusalem	Jerusalem ID	Absentee	Restricted access within OPT
<i>Status F</i>	Palestinian residents of the occupied West Bank	West Bank ID	Governed by PA	No access beyond OPT
<i>Status G</i>	Palestinian residents of the occupied Gaza Strip	Gaza ID	Governed by PA	No access beyond OPT
<i>Status H</i>	Palestinians internally displaced in the OPT	West Bank or Gaza ID	Absentee	No access to the lands in the OPT from which displaced
<i>Status I</i>	Palestinian refugees in OPT	West Bank or Gaza ID	Absentee	No access to lands in Israel from which displaced
<i>Status J</i>	Palestinian refugees outside historic Palestine	determined by country of residence/ citizenship	Absentee	No access to historic Palestine (unless granted tourist visas on foreign passports)

In the case of the dominant group and perpetrators of apartheid, the test is based on whether people identify themselves as Jewish citizens of Israel and Zionists. Jews are all considered Israeli nationals under the peculiar extraterritorial definition of nationality as defined and applied by the state of Israel, although there is significant social and economic discrimination against non-European Jewish Israelis that is beyond the scope of this article. Not all Jews, however, have exercised their privilege and acquired Israeli citizenship. Hence, not all people of Jewish faith can be considered part of one racial or ethnic group in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, despite the fact that the state of Israel projects itself as the representative of Jews around the world. Hence, only those who have voluntarily become Israeli citizens and adhere to Israel's political ideology, Zionism, constitute the relevant 'racial' or 'ethnic' group in this context. Political Zionism – “the transformation of Palestine, in whole or in part, into the Jewish Land of Israel (*Eretz Israel*), through the dispossession and mass transfer of the native indigenous Palestinian Arab population out of Palestine, and the establishment, through the Jewish colonization of Palestine, of a sovereign Jewish state” - is the heart of the legal, political and historical reality of the state of Israel,³⁶ a state controlled by Zionist Jewish Israelis. Hence, the common element of this ethno-national group is self-identification as Jewish Israeli and Zionist.

While Jewish Israeli society can be considered complicit in the commission of the crime of apartheid through funding the state apparatus with their tax moneys, service in the Israeli military and other institutions involved in the commission of the crime, and otherwise, Jewish Israelis who have opposed Zionism and recognize Palestinian rights cannot be held to the same level of accountability. Furthermore, including Zionist political ideology in our analysis of the perpetrators of apartheid enables us to distinguish the increased responsibility of those who have consciously chosen to implement their right to Israeli citizenship through Israel's *Law of Return* as well as those who have actively sought to perpetuate the commission of apartheid through work and membership in institutions complicit in this commission, particularly in the fields of governmental and military decision-making. A framework incorporating supporters of Zionism as guilty parties in the crime of apartheid also enables us to hold international actors who have supported the Zionist project, such as Christian Zionist groups, accountable for encouraging and cooperating with the racial group that has implemented the policies and practices constituting the crime of apartheid.

Hence, for the purpose of the applicability of the crime of apartheid to the state of Israel, the two relevant 'racial or ethnic' groups are Palestinian nationals and Zionist Jewish Israelis.

Apartheid across the Green Line and Boundaries

Zionist Jewish Israelis, the group that forms and controls the Israeli government, has 'legalized' a system of institutionalized racial discrimination against Palestinian nationals which intends to establish and maintain domination of Zionist Jewish Israelis over Palestinian nationals. Although the legal status of the territory of Israel and the OPT differ, some of the most fundamental laws and institutions of Israel are applied to and work in both areas indiscriminately, affecting all Palestinian nationals, including those who have been displaced outside the boundaries of these areas, i.e. refugees. As Miloon Kothari, former UN special rapporteur on the right to housing, concluded “essentially, the institutions, laws and practices that Israel had developed to dispossess the Palestinians (now Israeli citizens) inside its 1948 border (the Green Line) have been applied with comparable effect in the areas occupied since 1967.”³⁷

While the following section deals with the geographic continuity of Israel's crime of apartheid in that it affects Palestinian nationals regardless of their location, it is important to note that particular apartheid laws, policies and practices listed in the Apartheid Convention and violated by Israel often have different effects on different segments of the Palestinian group. For instance, denial of the right of return (listed as an apartheid policy and practice in Article II(c) of the Apartheid Convention) disproportionately targets Palestinian refugees and internally displaced persons whether they live in a refugee camp in Lebanon or Gaza or in a city near their original village in Israel; while the restrictions of Palestinian freedom of movement prevent citizens of Israel from entering Gaza and “Area A” in the West Bank and Palestinian with West Bank ID from crossing the Green Line and moving within the OPT. A central point to keep in mind in what follows is that regardless of the variation in the ways in which Israeli apartheid affects different segments of the Palestinian population, since it is the same state operating

on behalf of the Zionist Jewish Israeli group that is implementing these laws, policies and practices with the clear goal of establishing and maintaining the domination of that group in Israel and the OPT, then it is inaccurate to consider the violations as limited to one area; a mistake made by many in limiting their analysis of Israeli apartheid to a particular geographic area or a particular segment of Palestinian society. As Oren Yiftachel argues, the “common scholarly and political attempts to portray the existence of Israel proper within the Green Line, as “Jewish and democratic,” are hence both analytically flawed and politically deceiving.”³⁸ He suggests that “the entire area under Israeli control – that is, Israel/Palestine between river and sea – should be analyzed as one political-geographic unit.”³⁹ Central to such an analysis are the people displaced and denied return to this political-geographic unit.

The *systematic* nature of racial discrimination – the intent and plan to distinguish, exclude, dominate, and oppress on grounds of nationality - is embodied in a number of Israeli laws, policies and practices driven by political Zionism. Among these laws, policies and practices are the numerous plans of population transfer developed by Zionist Jewish Israelis to transfer – either internally or externally – Palestinian nationals from Israel and the OPT and prevent the return of those who have been displaced.⁴⁰ These plans include Plan Dalet, the military plan implemented in 1948 which aimed to expand the Jewish areas beyond those allocated by the United Nations in the 1947 Partition Plan (Resolution 181) and remove Arab/Palestinian presence from these areas; the Allon Plan, which aimed to annex as much Palestinian land as possible immediately after the 1967 occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, the central motto of which was “maximum security and maximum territory for Israel with the minimum Arabs”; and, the Dayan Plan, which aimed to facilitate Israel’s control over lands in the OPT and developed by Moshe Dayan, who explained “it is also important for ourselves to emphasize that we are not foreigners in the west Bank. Judea and Samaria is Israel and we are not there as foreign conquerors but as returners to Zion.”⁴¹

It is beyond the scope of this article to examine the entire regime that sustains apartheid in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. It suffices to say that a number of laws, policies and practices fundamental to the state of Israel amount to systematic institutionalized racial discrimination for the purpose of establishing and maintaining the superiority of Zionist Jewish Israelis over Palestinians.⁴²

Among these laws is the 1950 *Law of Return*, which stipulates that all Jews in the world are considered nationals of the state and can acquire Israeli citizenship.⁴³ Palestinians (non-Jews) are subject to the 1952 *Citizenship and Entry into Israel*



Israeli settlement and ‘by-pass’ roads around Bethlehem, areas completely inaccessible to Palestinians with West Bank IDs.
© Badil.

Law, which limits eligibility for Israeli citizenship to non-Jews who were present in the territory of Israel between 1948 and 1952 and their descendents. This law excludes and *de facto* de-nationalizes Palestinian refugees who were displaced in 1948⁴⁴ while any Jew around the world can “return” to “Israel,” including the occupied Palestinian territory. Combined, the Law of Return and the Citizenship Law form the basis of a regime of systematic discrimination; it creates a superior status-Jewish nationals - and an inferior status - ‘non-Jews’ composed mainly of Palestinians. This regime discriminates against Palestinians, in particular Palestinian refugees, on grounds of nationality. John Quigly concludes that “by discriminating against the indigenous inhabitants, both those who were displaced and those who were not, the two statutes constitute apartheid legislation.”⁴⁵ In addition, the Israeli parliament, the Knesset, recently passed the Ensuring Rejection of the Right of Return Law, which provides that the refugees, including those displaced in 1967 from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, will not be returned unless approved by an absolute majority of ministers.⁴⁶ The Knesset has also passed a temporary amendment to the Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law which suspends the possibility of granting Israeli citizenship and residence permits in Israel, including through family reunification, to residents of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.⁴⁷ These more recent laws were passed with the intent to maintain a demographic Jewish majority in Israel and the OPT and to protect this advantage by denying the rights of Palestinians to return and to family reunification.

Moreover, in the OPT, two legal systems apply. The Israeli delegation at the review of the state of Israel by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination verbally confirmed that two legal regimes apply in the OPT: Jewish people are subject to Israeli law (Israeli Basic Law) while Palestinians are subject to a complex mixture of Ottoman, British, Jordanian law and Israeli military orders.⁴⁸ In other words, Israel applies Israeli law extra-territorially – wherever an Israeli citizen goes in the OPT, Israeli law follows. As Golda Meir said “the frontier [of Israel] is where Jews live, not where there is a line on the map.”⁴⁹ This reality creates a two tier legal system clearly constituting discrimination on national grounds against Palestinian nationals in and from the occupied Palestinian territory.

Para-statal institutions such as the Jewish Agency (JA) and the World Zionist Organization (WZO), which includes the Jewish National Fund (JNF), the United Israel Appeal, and other corporations or institutions owned and controlled by the WZO⁵⁰ and the governmental Israel Land Administration ensure Jewish immigration and control and manage approximately 92 percent⁵¹ of land in Israel. These organizations are para-statal in that “the exclusivist constitutional stipulations of the WZO, JA and

Israeli settlement and 'by-pass' roads around Bethlehem, areas completely inaccessible to Palestinians with West Bank IDs.
© Badil.



JNF (for Jews only) are incorporated into the body of the laws of the State of Israel through a detailed sequence of strategic Knesset legislation...⁵² The Constitution of the Jewish Agency stipulates that “land is to be acquired as Jewish property and... the title of the lands acquired is to be taken in the name of the JNF to the end that the same shall be held the inalienable property of the Jewish people. The Agency shall promote agricultural colonization based on Jewish labor, and in all works or undertakings carried out or furthered by the Agency, it shall be deemed to be a matter of principle that Jewish labor shall be employed.”⁵³ The Jewish Agency and World Zionist Organization are part of the state of Israel. Their mandate and relationship is enshrined in the 1952 *World Zionist Organization and Jewish Agency Status Law*; the 1953 *Keren Kayemeth Leisrael (Jewish National Fund) Law*; the 1954 *Covenant between the Government of Israel and the Zionist Executive*; the 1961 *Covenant between the Government of Israel and the Jewish National Fund*; the 1971 *Covenant between the State of Israel and the World Zionist Organization*.

The Israeli Knesset (parliament) and the WZO/JA signed the 1952 *World Zionist Organization and Jewish Agency Status Law*, which stipulates:

“The mission of gathering in the exiles, which is the central task of the State of Israel and the Zionist Movement in our days, requires constant effort by the Jewish people in the Diaspora; the State of Israel, therefore, expects the cooperation of all Jews, as individuals and groups, in building up the State and assisting the immigration to it of the masses of the [Jewish] people...”⁵⁴

The Memorandum of Association of the JNF as incorporated in Israel in 1954 defines its primary goal as “to purchase, acquire on lease or in exchange, etc,... in the prescribed region (which expression shall in this Memorandum mean the state of Israel in any area within the jurisdiction of the Government of Israel) or any part thereof, *for the purpose of settling Jews on such lands and properties*.”⁵⁵ The JA and WZO “enjoy a legal right to discriminate in favor of Jews”⁵⁶ because their control over the land ensures the basis of the “national Jewish home” or *Eretz Israel*.⁵⁷ In a new Covenant between the Jewish Agency and World Zionist Organization in 1971, a division of labor on a geopolitical basis was agreed whereby the JA is active in Israel whereas the WZO is active in all member states of the UN and the OPT. “Subject to this arrangement, the Settlement Division of the WZO, funded by the government of Israel and/or by non-tax-exempt donations, is active in the 1967 occupied territories, whereas the Israel department of the JA, funded by various tax-exempt Zionist appeals, is active inside the state of Israel.”⁵⁸ In the OPT, over 40 percent of the land in the occupied West Bank is under the control of Jewish settlements and related infrastructure, and no longer accessible to Palestinians.⁵⁹ It is therefore undeniable that the Jewish Agency and the World Zionist Organization operate in both policy and practice for the exclusive benefit of Jewish nationals in Israel and the OPT, and work as para-statal organizations that implement and administer apartheid policies and practices on behalf of the Israeli state.

In order to acquire land, a number of laws and measures were enacted. These include for instance the 1943 *Land (Acquisition for Public Purposes) Ordinance* and the 1950 *Absentee Property Law*.⁶⁰ The latter allows the state to acquire the lands of Palestinians displaced during the Nakba. Under this law, displaced Palestinians are considered ‘absentees,’ defined as any person, who before September 1948, was out of the country in an area under the control of the Arab League Forces, or who had left his or her normal place of residence during the period prescribed in the law, or who, between 29 November 1947 and the date of coming into effect of this law, was otherwise deemed ‘absent.’⁶¹ While not overtly discriminatory, the term ‘person’ in the law is interpreted as not including Jews.⁶² This law applies to Palestinian refugees and internally displaced persons (IDP) in Israel, who are considered ‘present absentees’ (physically present but absent under the law). Lands confiscated under this law were transferred to the state’s Custodian of Absentee Property. A similar regime exists in the OPT, whereby confiscated lands are transferred to the Custodian of Governmental and Abandoned Property in Judea and Samaria (i.e. occupied West Bank) under a number of military orders such as the 1967 *Military Order 58, Order Concerning Absentee Property (Private Property)*. Under this order “property whose legal owner, or whoever is granted the power to control it by law, left the area prior to 7 June 1967 or subsequently”⁶³ is declared absentee or abandoned property. The property is transferred to the Custodian who acquires all rights previously vested with the owner.⁶⁴

“Theoretically and legally, the ‘Custodian’ is entrusted with protecting the property and assets of ‘absentees’ until they return to reclaim their rights. In practice, however, and because Israel has consistently barred the repatriation of refugees, the ‘Custodian’ in the West Bank functions very similarly to his counterpart inside Israel. Essentially, the former facilitates the transfer of ‘absentee properties’ (especially lands) to Jewish control and thus prevents the rightful Palestinian owners from pressing claims to their own lands and properties.”⁶⁵

The 1950 *Absentee Law* and the *Military Order 58, Order Concerning absentee Property (Private Property)* violate the prohibition against the expropriation of landed property belonging to a racial group.⁶⁶ In other words “Israeli legislation excludes the indigenous population from the settler’s land but does not exclude the settlers from the indigenous land.”⁶⁷

In addition to Israel’s apartheid legislation, the state also enforces practices of physical separation and segregation. For instance, the Israeli government has a policy of house demolition and forced eviction of Palestinians in Israel and the OPT, in particular in areas which Israel aims to acquire, such as Area C, eastern Jerusalem and the closed area between the Wall and the Green Line in the West Bank, and the Naqab (Negev), Jaffa and the Galilee.⁶⁸ Miloon Kothari, UN Special Rapporteur on housing, found that “the demolitions ordered either for lack of permit or another pretext have a military dimension and a gratuitously cruel nature.”⁶⁹ The Committee against Torture in its review of Israel concurred and expressed concern that “Israeli policies on house demolitions ... may, in certain instances, amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”⁷⁰ The policy of the government of Israel to destroy Palestinian houses clearly denies the right to dignity and freedom from torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. In the OPT the Wall and its associated regime clearly have the purpose and effect of separating Jewish Israelis from Palestinians, the acquisition of Palestinian lands for Jewish-only colonies and related infrastructure and the establishment of a Jewish majority on these lands.⁷¹ The International Court of Justice, a number of UN Human Rights treaty bodies, independent experts and the International Committee of the Red Cross concluded that the construction of the Wall causes forced displacement and amounts to population transfer.⁷²

In Israel, Palestinians displaced beyond the borders of the new state of Israel were intentionally and systematically barred from returning. In the 1948-1966 period, Israel maintained and expanded on the British Mandate system’s emergency laws directing them exclusively at the Palestinians who managed to stay within the nascent state’s borders. These emergency laws involved restrictions to mobility, arbitrary military governance that involved the governance of the Palestinian citizens under military laws while Jewish Israeli citizens were governed under civil laws. The central aim of these laws was clearing the land of its indigenous inhabitants for the purpose of transferring title of the land to the state and international Zionist agencies.⁷³ The policies and practices used by Israel in the administration of Palestinians in the OPT are a clear extension of the 1948-1966 military governance regime.

In Israel, national planning laws and master plans have a similar effect in particular in the Naqab, Jaffa and the Galilee, where there are still large numbers of Palestinians. For instance, Palestinian Bedouin in the Naqab live in villages that predate the establishment of the Israeli state but are ‘unrecognized’ under the 1965 Planning and Building Law. This law re-zoned communities and areas where building and construction is permitted and rendered illegal any building or habitations outside these zones, and therefore subject to demolition.⁷⁴ Israel does not provide these villages access to basic services, frequently fumigates their lands with poisonous chemicals and subjects the houses in these areas to demolition, taking control of the land for so-called Jewish development projects.⁷⁵ The displaced residents are forced to relocate to one of seven planned ‘concentration’ towns— the equivalent of reservations – where they are circumscribed to minimum space, completely inadequate for their nomadic and pastoral way of life.⁷⁶ In a recent report, Human Rights Watch concluded that “discriminatory land and planning policies have made it virtually impossible for Bedouin to build legally where they live, and also exclude them from the state’s development plans for the region. The state implements forced evictions, home demolitions, and other punitive measures disproportionately against Bedouin as compared with actions taken regarding structures owned by Jewish Israelis that do not conform to planning law.”⁷⁷ According to Human Rights Watch, “the state’s

motives for these discriminatory, exclusionary and punitive policies can be elicited from policy documents and official rhetoric. The state appears intent on maximizing its control over Naqab land and increasing the Jewish population in the area for strategic, economic and demographic reasons.⁷⁸ The policy of the state of Israel towards Palestinians in Israel prevents their full development by denying them their right to freedom of residence and adequate standard of living and amounts to policies and practices designed to divide the population along racial or ethnic lines by the creation of separate reserves for Palestinians.

In addition, the few ‘mixed’ communities in Israel, such as Ramle and Lydd, have walls and earth embankments that separate the Jewish and Palestinian residents. The municipalities and the Israeli government often describe these separations as “acoustic walls” aimed to prevent noise coming from Palestinian neighborhoods, burglaries and the free passage of drug addicts. They were however more accurately described by the secretary of Moshav Zvi as measures aimed to block both physical and eye contact between the two communities.⁷⁹ The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed deep concern about the fact that Israel maintains separate “sectors” for Jews and Palestinians and recommended that Israel assess to which extent this may amount to racial segregation and avoid separation of communities.⁸⁰ Measures such as house demolition, forced eviction and displacement, walls designed to divide the population along ethnic or racial groups, the result being the creation of separate reserves and ghettos for Palestinian nationals thus violating the Apartheid Convention.

Conclusion

Fundamental laws, policies and practices of the Israeli government aim to establish and maintain Zionist Jewish Israeli domination over Palestinian nationals through the colonization of their lands and resources. These laws, policies and practices affect all Palestinian nationals, irrespective of their location and status since at least the Nakba of 1948. Hence, the crime of apartheid is applicable to Israel over all of Israel and the OPT. The ongoing exclusion of Palestinians from their homes, lands and country through internal and external displacement over the past 60 years has forced 70 percent of Palestinians to live as refugees and/or IDPs; the largest and longest standing refugee and IDP crises in the world today.

In order to challenge Israel’s rejection of international law as a valid framework capable of bringing a lasting solution to the conflict and its apartheid laws, policies and practices, it is necessary to support the shift of the struggle from the limited focus on the occupation of the OPT back to its roots as a struggle against apartheid and colonialism and occupation in all of mandate Palestine. In other words, only reparations based on an end to racial discrimination through the institutionalization of justice will end the conflict and bring peace. Uri Davis describes this process as “the dismantlement of the state of Israel as a Jewish state in the political Zionist sense of the term, an apartheid state, and its replacement with a democratic Palestine.”⁸¹ Hence, the conflict will end when the colonizer and colonized live together, in equality, in all of Palestine. Until then, the racist and discriminatory laws, policies and practices of the state of Israel must be exposed and the government encouraged and pressured to annul its apartheid and colonial laws, policies and practices.

**Karine Mac Allister is the former Coordinator for Legal Advocacy at Badil. We wish her all the best as she begins her years as a doctoral candidate in Montreal.*

Endnotes

See Online Version at: <http://www.badil.org/al-majdal/al-majdal.htm>

Removing the Log in Our Own Eye: US Churches Seeking Justice in Palestine/Israel

by David Wildman

Applying International Law in Palestine/Israel

“We denounce as immoral an ordering of life that perpetuates injustice...Believing that international justice requires the participation of all peoples, we endorse the United Nations and its related bodies and the International Court of Justice as the best instruments now in existence to achieve a world of justice and law.” --United Methodist Church Social Principles

For decades, United Methodists have worked with other churches, human rights groups and the broader international community to uphold UN resolutions, human rights conventions and international law as the basis for just and lasting peace for all. Given this human rights-based approach, ending Israel’s military occupation constitutes a necessary first step for establishing equality and mutual security for Palestinians and Israelis alike. Within an international law framework, the situation in Palestine is not a conflict between two equal players, but a case of apartheid, occupation and colonization.

The United Methodist *Social Principles*, which are guiding principles for the whole church, recognize the disparity of military



In many cases, Palestinians are separated from their holy sites by Israeli imposed mobility restrictions. © Badil.

and economic power that exists in many parts of the world. “Upon the powerful rests responsibility to exercise their wealth and influence with restraint. We affirm the right and duty of people of all nations to determine their own destiny. We urge the major political powers to use their nonviolent power to maximize the political, social and economic self-determination of other nations rather than to further their own special interests.” (Para. 165B)

In the US, churches often play a critical role in movements for justice – including efforts to end Israel’s military occupation. Yet US churches are divided on the conflict in Palestine/Israel. Christian Zionists are some of the most ardent supporters and funders of Israeli settlements built illegally on Palestinian land. Some churches are reluctant to criticize the government of Israel and focus their criticism almost entirely on Palestinian violent resistance.

At the same time, many church congregation members are challenging longstanding human rights violations in the occupied territories and urging the international community to step in to protect civilians. Ironically, United Methodists and others who espouse a universal framework of human rights and international law as applicable to all, are attacked for being one-sided and anti-Israel or even anti-Semitic.

To be clear, movements for human rights and social justice are often charged with being one-sided when they prophetically stand in solidarity with the oppressed and speak truth to power. The United Methodist Church has a long history of working with oppressed communities to uphold human rights and international law. In 1960, the Methodist Church General Conference made a commitment to build a Church Center for the United Nations in New York City. The Church Center has served as a peoples’ gathering place to confront the governments of the world and hold them accountable to universal standards of human rights and international law. Ironically, as churches supported the peoples of Africa in achieving independence from colonial and apartheid rule throughout the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, Israel was embarking on an active colonial project of building settlements and imposing apartheid policies on occupied Palestinian land while it was supporting those same colonial and apartheid regimes in Africa that the churches opposed.

Challenging Billions in US Military Aid to Israel

“A king is not saved by his great army; the war horse is a vain hope for victory, and by its great might it cannot save.”
--Psalm 33:16-17

Each year Israel receives more in US foreign aid than any other state. Since Israel is required to use most of the roughly \$2-3 billion in taxpayer aid it receives each year on US-made weapons, most of the money in fact goes to US military companies. These arms companies are big campaign contributors to members of Congress from both political parties. While such aid clearly benefits US arms producers, arms dealers, their shareholders, and many congressional campaigns, it will not help Palestinian civilians.

The United Methodist Church has long raised questions about military aid rather than economic development in countries around the world. The 1968 Book of Resolutions included a study document on “The Middle East” that first challenged the sale of arms to nations in the Middle East. Since 1976 the General Conference has adopted resolutions that call for United Methodists to “oppose the continuing flow of arms from all sources to the Middle East.” The Social Principles have long declared, “that the militarization of society must be challenged and stopped; that the manufacture, sale, and deployment of armaments must be reduced and controlled.”

Yet income-tax payments by US Christians fund military occupation and apartheid bypass roads. In addition, United Methodist pension funds profit from companies involved in business that perpetuates violations of Palestinian human rights. We have decades of resolutions supporting the equal rights of Palestinians and Israelis, yet millions of church investments profit from Palestinian suffering.

The New Testament was written in a context of Roman colonial rule, discrimination, and military occupation in Palestine. It also took place in the midst of an active armed resistance movement (the Zealots) against colonialism and occupation. So, if we want to understand fully the meaning of biblical texts for today, it is helpful to listen to Palestinians who are facing the same dynamics of military occupation, colonial control of their land and apartheid-like discrimination.

One of the goals of the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries is: “Seek Justice, Freedom and Peace.” This is at the heart of the United Methodist Church’s priority to end poverty. It expresses the kind of solidarity needed today: “We will participate with people oppressed by unjust economic, political and social systems in programs that seek to build just, free and peaceful societies.” Instead of blaming the victim, or offering charity to the victim, this goal challenges us to stand in solidarity with the oppressed and follow their lead in demanding justice. The call by hundreds of Palestinian civil society organizations for nonviolent action of “boycott, divestment and sanctions” embodies such a demand for justice.

One “unjust system” that we must confront today is the US use of the veto at the UN. Since 1970, half of US vetoes blocked the international community from criticizing Israeli attacks on Palestinian civilians. One third of US vetoes blocked international criticism of apartheid regimes in southern Africa. Thus the US has repeatedly used the veto to protect military occupation and colonial rule from international criticism and sanction at great cost to civilians in southern Africa and Palestine. The 2008 United Methodist General Conference declared, “The United Methodist Church call[s] upon the United States, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, to accept the authority of Security Council resolutions, to refrain from vetoing resolutions, and abide by Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, as well as all other relevant UN resolutions and International Court of Justice rulings, that provide a framework for bringing this conflict to a just and permanent end.”

Just as the anti-Apartheid movement turned to boycott and divestment as non-violent, moral, economic measures by churches, universities and trade unions to end unjust corporate support for South African Apartheid, so too churches and activists today are taking up nonviolent, moral actions like divestment to end corporate support for Israel’s longstanding violations of international law.

Morally Responsible Investment, Divestment & the United Methodist Church

For many years, the United Methodist Book of Discipline has included the following guidelines on Socially Responsible Investment:

“It shall be the policy of The United Methodist Church that all general boards and agencies, . . . annual conferences, foundations, and local churches, shall, in the investment of money . . . endeavor to avoid investments that appear likely, directly or indirectly, to support violation of human rights. . . . The boards and agencies are to give careful consideration to shareholder advocacy, including advocacy of corporate disinvestment” --2004 Book of Discipline, ¶ 716

For years churches have engaged companies on a myriad of social justice issues with the notable exception of profiteering from Israel’s military occupation. Following the 2004 General Conference resolution reaffirming longstanding opposition to Israeli settlements on Palestinian land, and following the International Court of Justice advisory opinion (July 2004) that Israel’s separation wall violates international law, Annual Conferences (regional bodies of the United Methodist Church) began to join Presbyterians, college campuses and grassroots movements calling on companies to stop profiting from the Israeli occupation of Palestine, campaigns modeled on the anti-Apartheid divestment movement in solidarity with the people of South Africa.

The 2005 New England and Virginia Annual conferences were the first to adopt calls for a divestment process from companies profiting from military occupation and the building of settlements under the principle of Socially Responsible Investment (SRI). This principle involves nonviolent, moral, economic measures by investors aimed at changing unjust behavior as well as corporate profiting from unjust behavior. While church activists have succeeded in getting pension funds and foundation

endowments to write letters and file shareholder resolutions, these large financial institutions within churches have rarely initiated divestment from companies. Only as grassroots calls for divestment grew did larger church investors like pension funds begin to engage companies profiting from Israel's military occupation.

Such grassroots, nonviolent, moral efforts seek to break the flow of profits, corporate support and military aid that help sustain Israel's military occupation, settlement expansion, and ongoing displacement of Palestinians. They might also sever the flow of dollars from companies which give generously to US Congress members, who then repeatedly vote billions of dollars in further arms shipments to Israel.

The *Social Principles* include a section on 'corporate responsibility.' "Corporations are responsible not only to their stockholders, but also to other stakeholders: their workers, suppliers, vendors, customers, the communities in which they do business... We support the public's right to know what impact corporations have in these various arenas so that people can make informed choices about which corporations to support" (Para. 163I). The hard work comes in trying to hold specific companies accountable to Palestinian communities where their business activities have wrought such devastation.

General Conference only rarely adopts resolutions for boycotts of specific companies. There exist precedents for such resolutions, including one against Dutch Shell Oil for its support of South African Apartheid, Nestle for its production of dangerous infant formula, and JP Stevens for its systematic abuse of workers' rights. More recent resolutions have supported boycotts of Taco Bell and Mt. Olive Pickle for these companies' abuse of farm worker rights and working conditions. The real work of corporate accountability work takes place not at General Conference, but through General Agencies, Annual Conferences and United Methodists active in ecumenical and grassroots coalitions.

In late 2001, the Women's Division and Global Ministries were among several US church organizations that helped launch the *US Campaign to End Israeli Occupation* based on freedom from occupation and equal rights for all under international law. The US Campaign now includes over 250 organizations and represents the broadest interfaith effort to change US policies towards Palestine/Israel. Since 2002 the US Campaign has included corporate accountability and divestment work in its advocacy of Palestinian human rights.

Caterpillar: Symbol of Corporate Complicity

Many US and international groups have specifically worked to challenge the US-based Caterpillar, calling on the corporation to stop selling bulldozers and other equipment used by the Israeli military to demolish Palestinian homes and build apartheid roads and the Wall on Palestinian land. Perhaps more than any other company, Caterpillar has come to symbolize corporate complicity in human rights violations of collective punishment. For 20 years, the United Methodist Church has called on the government of Israel to "cease destroying Palestinian homes" (1988 General Conference), but the demolitions continue.

In 2004, the Presbyterian Church identified Caterpillar as one of several companies to challenge, calling on it to stop profiting from occupation. For five years now, several church investors along with Jewish Voice for Peace have filed shareholder resolutions with Caterpillar to examine the misuse of their equipment by the Israeli government. While the company denies these efforts have any impact, they have changed the time and location of their annual meeting to a much more remote place. Caterpillar management changed their procedures to severely limit shareholder discussion – much of which aimed to expose Caterpillar complicity in human rights violations by Israel.

In 2008, the General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) submitted a petition to General Conference calling for United Methodists to divest from Caterpillar until it ends its role in Israeli occupation and the destruction of Palestinian homes. Just before General Conference, GBCS met twice with the CEO of Caterpillar, Jim Owen, himself a United Methodist. Based on

these discussions, Caterpillar sent a letter to GBCS on 7 April 2008 that stated, “we expect our customers to use our products in environmentally responsible ways and consistent with human rights and the requirements of international law.” They also agreed to a meeting with religious shareholders. GBCS then withdrew its divestment petition from General Conference in order to pursue the human rights cause directly with Caterpillar and other religious shareholders.

In corporate accountability work, shareholders often withdraw shareholder resolutions when company management agrees to meet on specific issues. When meetings produce substantive changes in corporate policies and practices then filing the resolution will have served as a catalyst for change. If little change ensues then socially responsible investors often reintroduce resolutions to keep pressing the company to end unjust actions. Shareholders and human rights advocates continue to press Caterpillar. An ecumenical group of denominational investors will closely monitor Caterpillar dealerships and contracts until the company ends all involvement with home demolitions, uprooting of trees, building of settlements, bypass roads or the Separation Wall.

Visit <http://www.neumc.org/divest> to see the New England Annual Conference divestment resources, including a full listing of companies on the divestment list, correspondence, and documentation.

For materials on General Conference divestment petitions as well as responses to critics of divestment see: www.unitedmethodistdivestment.org

For the General Board of Pensions position on divestment see: www.gbophb.org/UserFiles/File/resources/pdf/gc2008/divest.pdf

A Growing Call for Divestment

From 2005-07 ten United Methodist Annual Conferences adopted resolutions calling for challenging and divesting from companies profiting from Israel’s occupation. The New England Annual Conference has done the most extensive research and activism of any group. After adopting a resolution in 2005 they formed a research task force which identified and documented over 100 companies supporting or profiting from Israeli occupation, settlements or other violations of international law. They then wrote letters to many of the companies asking

them to stop all business activity in violation of international law. In some cases, companies replied saying it was not their responsibility. But the New England United Methodist task force sent further letters citing the Nuremberg Principles and the moral obligation of companies to ensure that they do not engage in activities violating international law.

Finally, in June 2007, New England Methodists placed 20 companies that had all refused to change their practices on a divestment list. This process serves as a model for other churches. The research is being widely shared not only with US churches but with churches, trade unions and activists in Europe, the Philippines and Palestine/Israel who are doing similar work.

The 2008 United Methodist General Conference

The General Conference of the United Methodist Church meets once every four years and is the only body that speaks on behalf of the whole church. The United Methodist Church is a global church with some 25-30% of its membership in countries of Africa, Europe and in the Philippines. General Conference adopts broad policies and principles designed to guide church actions. The work of implementing such principles goes to agencies and local churches.

Six Annual Conferences along with the Methodist Federation for Social Action and several individuals submitted divestment petitions to the 2008 General Conference, which took place from 22 April – 2 May in Fort Worth, Texas. They all outlined a process of corporate engagement that included divestment as a last step if a company refused to end its involvement in violations of international law stemming from Israel’s military occupation, the Separation Wall and settlements. Because these petitions all involved investment decisions they were referred to the Finance committee. The Finance Committee rejected all divestment petitions with mandatory procedures but adopted one on Sudan which only encouraged United

Methodists “to prayerfully consider divestment” as well as one creating a Socially Responsible Investment task force to develop more explicit church-wide guidelines in the area of human rights. The plenary later affirmed the committee recommendations. Many churches and pension funds were also reluctant to take the lead on divestment regarding apartheid South Africa. Instead, many chose other forms of shareholder activism short of divestment.

Critics quickly and wrongly hailed these decisions by General Conference as a rejection of ‘divestment from Israel’ with language suggesting the resolutions were anti-Semitic. However, none of the petitions proposed divestment from Israel but rather selective divestment from US companies profiting from military occupation, the building of settlements, bypass roads and the separation wall that all violate international law.

Opponents of divestment do not offer alternative nonviolent strategies, but seek to equate challenges to companies profiting from Israel’s military occupation with criticism of the right of Israel to exist and with anti-Semitism. Such attacks are meant to intimidate and stifle churches from taking up nonviolent actions. Yet at General conference, it seemed the longstanding reluctance of church financial institutions to support divestment for any reason was the main factor in blocking a mandatory church-wide divestment process.

Many Finance Committee delegates look to the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits (Pensions) for guidance on petitions. Leading up to General Conference, Pensions openly opposed divestment petitions in presentations and on their website. Their argument against divestment was primarily based on financial considerations. They also argued that by holding shares, rather than divesting, they had more opportunity to influence a company’s unjust behavior.

In a web statement entitled, “Position on Divestment,” there is a startling disparity and disconnect between the description of divestment relating to Sudan and to Israel/Palestine. The section on Sudan begins with the humanitarian crisis on the ground and then points to legislation adopted by the US Congress as well as local governments, universities and others. It concludes by suggesting the board may divest from one company if it does not change quickly.

By contrast, a section entitled, “Fiduciary Responsibility and Israeli-Palestinian Divestment” makes no mention of humanitarian conditions facing Palestinians on the ground. Instead it mentions its 74,000 plan participants (clergy and staff of general agencies) and states that “[d]ecisions regarding our investments, by necessity, must be *solely* for the future benefit of these plan participants” (Emphasis added). The lack of US government action, and that “no major U.S. institutional investor has adopted a similar strategy of divestment” are given as arguments against divestment. Such rationale cannot be found in the United Methodist Discipline and Social Principles which list human rights, not US government action or widespread action by other investors, as criteria for divestment.

Pensions’ position statement further declares that “[t]f the General Board were to divest from the many companies manufacturing or selling products or services purchased by Israelis who live in the occupied territories, we would find it difficult, if not impossible, to hire investment managers—our screening requirements would be so restrictive, investment managers would decline to comply.” Such a statement greatly mischaracterizes the divestment petitions and investment realities.

New England Annual Conference listed 20 companies on their divestment list in 2007. Pensions already excluded most of these as weapons manufacturers. Pensions already has a list of 633 companies on its “Failed/Ineligible Investment List” that are excluded for production of alcohol, tobacco, gambling, and weapons or for large military contracts. Yet, not one company is excluded for human rights abuses!

The argument that no investment manager could be found is simply false. Pensions itself already has an optional portfolio with stronger social screens that excludes all of the companies named for profiting from Israel’s military occupation such as Caterpillar

and Motorola! The argument that shareholders have more influence on a company than those who divest is not an either/or one. Institutional investors can place a company like Caterpillar on a 'no further purchase' list while using their existing shares for ongoing shareholder advocacy.

To get a full sense of what happened at General Conference we must examine the other petitions relating to Palestine/Israel. All of the one-sided petitions that uncritically supported Israel while ignoring the suffering of Palestinians were submitted by individuals and were soundly rejected. One to oppose any discussion of apartheid in relation to Israel was defeated by a show of hands. One that singled out Hamas for criticism was also defeated. One specifically entitled, "Oppose Divestment from Israel" was widely rejected.

At the same time, five petitions submitted by general agencies to update existing resolutions (on Holy Land Tours, on Opposition to Israeli Settlements, on Fair Trade products like Palestinian olive oil, on UN resolutions on Palestine/Israel) and add a new one condemning all violence and coercion, all passed. Those based on human rights for all, on international law, and on our biblical calling to be peacemakers – all passed. In general, the real work of General Conference occurs in the committees. The plenary accepted the committee recommendation on 98.6% of all petitions. Most of the petitions submitted by General Agencies are adopted as they have gone through a prior process of discussion and approval.

If we take all these decisions by General Conference together, it seems that while General Conference rejected specific recommendations for a mandatory church-wide divestment process, the mandate in the Discipline for Socially Responsible Investment and possible disinvestment remains the responsibility of each agency and annual conference. An amendment added more explicit reference to human rights in the Middle East, Sudan and China in the newly established Task force on Socially Responsible Investment. Thus the committee affirmed the human rights basis on which divestment petitions rested while not yet affirming the specific step of divestment for the whole church.

It remains the task of Annual Conferences and General Agencies to be good stewards, seekers of justice, and protectors of human rights through nonviolent shareholder advocacy with our investments. One Annual Conference has already introduced a new divestment resolution at its session in late May 2008. More divestment resolutions are likely in 2009 at regional and local levels. Like the movement seeking an end to Apartheid in southern Africa, there are a variety of nonviolent strategies that are all useful to end systemic discrimination and violence. There will continue to be plenty of healthy debates within churches on nonviolent actions like shareholder advocacy, divestment, ending military aid, and supporting direct action through accompaniment of civilians in the occupied territories.

The Global Christian Church taking action for 'Costly Solidarity' Today

In the global struggle against colonialism and Apartheid in South Africa, the World Council of Churches took a bold step in 1968 when it created its Program to Combat Racism. Much of the program lent nonviolent support to peoples' movements suffering from, and resisting, the brutal oppression of colonial regimes across southern Africa. The churches were subjected to harsh attacks for this program including accusations that the WCC was aiding terrorists. Those so-called terrorists included former President Nelson Mandela and the current governing party of South Africa, the African National Congress. Despite these attacks, the WCC's moral courage to stand for justice in the face of systemic oppression contributed greatly to eroding support for unjust rule.

It is important to note that the WCC did not create a program for dialogue in the midst of colonialism. Churches understood that only a program aimed at challenging systemic injustice would help build just and lasting peace for all. What is emerging today among the global church is a similar movement for justice: an ecumenical program to end military occupation and human rights violations through nonviolent actions.

Presbyterian 2008 General Assembly

The Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUSA) holds its General Assembly every two years. At the 2004 General Assembly the PCUSA first adopted a process of “phased, selective divestment” regarding companies supporting or profiting from military occupation of Palestine. After two years of vicious and well-funded attacks, the 2006 General Assembly changed the wording of its efforts but affirmed the continuing process of challenging companies to end their support of occupation. Since 2004 the PCUSA has joined with other churches to press Caterpillar, Motorola and several other companies through letters, meetings, and in shareholder resolutions on divestment from Israel.

At the 2008 General Assembly there was extensive debate on Palestine/Israel. Again, both efforts to speed up divestment and efforts to block divestment failed. By a vote of 504-171 (74% majority) General Assembly endorsed ongoing corporate engagement using established guidelines which include divestment as a last resort. It also called for regular updates on “the compliance, or lack thereof, by Caterpillar, Motorola, and other corporations involved with regard to General Assembly guidelines and concerns for justice and human rights.”

The same overture also endorsed the “Amman Call” issued by the World Council of Churches in June 18-20, 2007 that affirms “the human rights of refugees and occupied peoples.” Much of the debate centered on conflicting views of the peacemaking role of the church. Does peacemaking mean the church should serve as a prophetic witness for justice and human rights with actions like divestment? Or does it mean the church should avoid taking sides, remain neutral and seek a mediating role in the conflict? Critics of divestment sought to portray it as one-sided and therefore contrary to peacemaking, when in fact critics were quite one-sided in their silence on US military aid and corporate complicity in human rights violations against Palestinians.

Advocates of divestment argue that it embodies nonviolent efforts to end unjust corporate complicity in human rights violations. With the endorsement of the Amman Call and continued corporate engagement, the PCUSA again rejected calls for neutrality – which in fact are calls to maintain a status quo of occupation and oppression. One Presbyterian activist, summarizing the debates and actions at General Assembly, stated that “we can recognize injustice when we see it, and we will be neither silent, neutral, nor intimidated.”

In June 2007, 130 representatives from churches in the holy land and around the world met in Amman, Jordan to issue, “The Amman Call: Churches together for Peace and Justice in the Middle East.” The Call expresses the urgent call from Palestinian Christians, “No more words without deeds. It is time for action.” It seeks to mobilize broader church actions that embody “costly solidarity.” The final paragraph expresses the pledge of the global ecumenical movement to “risk reputations and lives to build with you bridges for an enduring peace among the peoples of this tortured and beautiful place – Palestine and Israel – to end these decades of injustice.”

Since the 2006 WCC Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil, a number of US churches met with Palestinian Christians to hear their pleas for greater nonviolent economic measures to end corporate support for Israel’s brutal military occupation and ongoing colonization. An ecumenical working group of denominational socially responsible investors, including United Methodists, has formed and is undertaking similar nonviolent measures with companies involved in Palestine/Israel. Hundreds of letters and several shareholder meetings with company managements have taken place. Shareholder resolutions on human rights and foreign military sales, like the ones with Caterpillar, were filed for the first time with ITT, Motorola and United Technologies. The World Council of Churches Amman Call included workshop recommendations to identify five companies for coordinated nonviolent economic measures from churches globally.

To date, these efforts have yet to produce changes in company practices. But many more church investors are now trying to do something about corporate complicity in Israel’s violation of Palestinian human rights. Companies are also on notice that they must account for their profiting from military occupation. Each year that military occupation continues, that settlements keep expanding, and that companies continue to profit from business that perpetuates these human rights violations, church investors will be forced to account for their reluctance to support divestment. Now, more than ever, grassroots Christians need to keep pressing church pension funds and other investors to take stronger actions to end corporate support for military occupation and settlements.

The Amman Call

Almost sixty years have passed since the Christian churches first spoke with one voice about Arab-Israeli peace. For the last forty years the Christian churches have called for an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestine. In the very place where Jesus Christ walked upon the earth, walls now separate families and the children of God - Christian, Muslim and Jew -- are imprisoned in a deepening cycle of violence, humiliation and despair. The Palestinian Christians from Gaza to Jerusalem and to Nazareth, have called out to their brothers and sisters in Christ with this urgent plea: "Enough is enough. No more words without deeds. It is time for action."

From the Amman Call. Read the rest at <http://www.oikoumene.org/index.php?id=3748>

Praying with our Feet: the March for Justice in Palestine/Israel

On 10 June 2007, many church members joined with the US Campaign to End Israeli Occupation and over 100 other groups in a national mobilization to end all US support for 40 years of Israeli occupation and human rights violations. The Call to End all US support for Israel's Military Occupation involves ending both military and corporate support. Two manifestations of these efforts are ongoing work targeting Caterpillar and Motorola. Since Motorola makes cell phones in addition to surveillance equipment and fuses used by Israeli settlers and the military, it is more vulnerable to a consumer-based campaign and boycott. Boycotts are often easier for churches to support than divestment because a boycott can be implemented by a wider group of consumers and not just investors. Ending corporate support will not happen with one decision, but will require a steady effort by grassroots churches and other activists pressuring those who make investment decisions to demand corporate accountability to protect Palestinian human rights. There are several crucial next steps that churches are and should be taking in support of the BDS campaign:

- Grassroots church folk who have called for divestment are now moving to implement it on a local and regional level as they continue to press for a church-wide process.
- Church pension funds and other investors should facilitate more in-depth corporate research on companies profiting from military occupation and settlements, and make such research widely available for use by local churches and individuals.
- Church institutional investors are working on further shareholder resolutions that will press companies to change, or at least document their refusal to end unjust behavior.
- Church pension holders are beginning to press the board of Pensions that they do not want their pension funds invested in companies profiting from military occupation. Twenty years ago pension holders played a key role in demanding that Pensions exclude military companies from their pension funds.
- As churches join in signing on to the WCC Amman Call they can focus efforts on several companies like Caterpillar or Motorola through a variety of actions from letter writing to shareholder resolutions to boycott to divestment.
- Link opposing military occupation of Palestine with opposing military occupation of Iraq. Several companies exploit both situations for massive war profits.
- Delegations to Palestine/Israel of church investment staff. When they meet with Palestinian and Israeli human rights advocates as well as Palestinian businesses, they will see the profound constraints military occupation and settlements place on the whole Palestinian economy. "Positive investment" is not a substitute for divestment: both are needed.
- As more churches study the manifestations of apartheid and colonialism imposed on the whole Palestinian society, support for nonviolent actions of boycott and divestment will grow. Involvement of the South African Council of Churches in a US Campaign sponsored Anti-Apartheid tour in November will greatly strengthen church involvement in the work of BDS for the long haul.

**David Wildman is the Executive Secretary - Human Rights & Racial Justice in the United Methodist Church's General Board of Global Ministries. He also helped found the US Campaign to End Israeli Occupation and currently serves as co-chair of its steering committee.*

Towards an Australian BDS Campaign

by Kim Bullimore



More on the Campaign at:

Australians for Palestine

www.australiansforpalestine.com

Melbourne Palestine Solidarity Network

www.melbourne-palestine.info

Australia Nakba Commemoration Page

www.1948.com.au

Coalition for Justice and Peace in Palestine

www.coalitionforpalestine.org

Nakba-60 Commemoration vigil in Melbourne calling for return of Palestinian refugees. May 2008, photo by Sonja Karkar.

On March 12, the new Australian Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd moved a motion calling on the Australian House of Representatives to “celebrate and commend the achievements of the State of Israel in the 60 years since its inception” and to reaffirm Canberra’s support for “Israel’s right to exist” and a “two-state solution” to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.¹ In moving the opposition-supported motion, Rudd made it perfectly clear that despite the 11 year conservative Howard government being swept from power, there would be no change in Australia’s policy in relation to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

For the past decade, the former Prime Minister, John Howard and his Liberal party government have been among the strongest supporters of the Zionist state of Israel. Howard had visited Israel at least three times and was often described in both the Australian and Israeli media as “a longstanding friend of Israel.”² In June 2007, when Howard was still Prime Minister of Australia, but clearly fighting a losing battle to stay in power, the Jerusalem Post sang his praises, describing him as “Israel’s greatest champion amongst world statesmen” and praising his “courageous support for Israel.”³ The Jerusalem Post article, which was written by Isi Leibler, a former veteran leader of the Australian Jewish community who had immigrated to Israel, went on to point out that while Howard was an exceptional champion, this was “not to suggest that Howard’s predecessors were unfriendly. Since the creation of our state, Australia has been led by a succession of governments from both sides of the political spectrum that were supportive of Israel. The solitary exception was Gough Whitlam (1972-1975), whose hostility against Israel during the Yom Kippur war is regarded as a historical aberration.”

The support by successive Australian governments, including the current Rudd government, for Israel's colonialism and dispossession comes as no surprise, especially given Australia's own record of historical and ongoing colonialist policies and practices. Australian Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, like the Palestinian people, have suffered under the brutal heel of invasion, dispossession and colonialism, having their land stolen and their human and civil rights systematically violated.

While Rudd won international and national acclaim in February, for moving a motion of apology to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were systematically and involuntarily separated from their families and the traditional lands as a result of the colonial policies of successive Federal and State governments (known in Australia as the "Stolen Generations") and acknowledging the historical mistreatment, injustice and suffering of Indigenous Australians saying that "decency, human decency, universal human decency demands that the nation now step forward to right a historical wrong," his government has in practice continued to implement racist and colonial policies.⁴

Like Palestinians, Indigenous Australians today, continue to be the victims of government sponsored racism, discrimination, restriction of movement and land control, as the draconian legislation introduced in 2007 by the Howard government reveal. This legislation saw the Federal government seize control of more than 60 Indigenous communities' lands and resources, the invasion of police and military units into these communities and excessive restrictions or "welfare quarantining" imposed on Indigenous welfare recipients. However, far from repealing the laws, the new Rudd government is now planning to expand many of the legislative measures to other states beyond the Northern Territory where it was first introduced.

While Rudd's motion of apology to the Stolen Generations has succeeded in somewhat disguising the fact that his government continues to uphold and implement racist and discriminatory policies, his government's motion in support of the Israeli state's 60th birthday could not have revealed more starkly the Rudd government's lack of "decency, human decency, universal decency" and its refusal to help "right historical wrongs." Instead, in moving the motion in support of the Israeli state, ignoring completely the plight of the Palestinian people and the human rights abuses they are suffering at the hands of the Zionist state, the Rudd government confirmed that in reality it is little different from the ousted conservative Howard government.

In response to Rudd's motion in support of Israel, supporters of Palestinian rights mobilised around the country to demonstrate that many Australians opposed his government's uncritical support for Israel. In addition to organizing a variety of actions around the country, Palestine solidarity activists also took out a half page advertisement in the country's only national newspaper, *The Australian*. The advertisement text stated that "we, as informed and concerned Australians, choose to disassociate ourselves from a celebration of the triumph of racism and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians since the Nakba (catastrophe) of 1948." It went on to say: "Australia and Australians should not give the Israeli people the impression that Australia supports them in their dispossession of the Palestinian people" and that "rather than celebrate the creation of the State of Israel, we should be recognizing the people of Palestine, those who were dispossessed, those who lived and died as refugees, those who continue to live and die at the hands of the State of Israel, and those who will continue to suffer and die in the future until justice is done."⁵

The "Improper motion" campaign, as it became known, was led by Melbourne based solidarity groups, Australians for Palestine, Women for Palestine and the Adelaide based Australian Friends of Palestine Association. In less than a week, the advertisement garnered more than 400 individual signatories, plus support from 37 civil society organizations, including a number of Australian unions. Several dozen more individual signatories were not included in the advertisement as they came in after the advertisement went to print. The campaign was a success not only because it succeeded in involving those not normally involved in activism for Palestine but also because it stirred up considerable media debate and coverage.



Palestine solidarity activists in Melbourne calling for an end to Israel's military occupation on the 40th anniversary of the 1967 war. June 2007, photo by Sonja Karkar.

The other success of the improper motion campaign was that it demonstrated once again the willingness of solidarity groups and activists around Australia to work together in support of Palestine. Australia, while having only a small population of 21 million people, is a geographically massive country. Our population is located primarily along the eastern seaboard but we also have sparse population centers distributed along the southern and western seabords. As a result, Palestine solidarity groups are separated by vast geographical distances. However, modern communication technology has enabled us to keep in touch with each other and work together on a range of collaborative projects.

In general, the various Palestine solidarity groups around Australia have campaigned around the key demands put forward by the Palestinian people themselves: an end to the 1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and the right of return for Palestinian refugees, as well as campaigning in support of the Palestinian citizens of Israel who struggle to retain what is left of their land within the Zionist state and for equal economic, social and political rights. Over the years, while keeping these demands at the forefront of their campaigning, Australian Palestine solidarity groups have also campaigned around the partial demands of dismantling the apartheid wall and for the end of the siege of Gaza and sought to bring a halt to unconditional Australian support for Israel's policies of colonialism, apartheid and population transfer.

Despite these campaigns and the willingness of Palestine solidarity activists to work together, there has not in recent years, been a single tactical campaign that has united all the Palestine solidarity groups. The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign, however, has the potential to provide this. While the campaign has begun to gain momentum in countries such as Canada, the UK, Ireland and South Africa, it has not yet been able to gain any significant hold in Australia. The primary reason for this is not necessarily a lack of interest in the campaign, but as of yet a lack of concentrated focus on the campaign in order to get it off the ground.

Like in many Western countries already engaged in the BDS campaign, an Australian campaign should also focus

around the various planks of the campaign: (1) a boycott campaign focused around consumer academic and cultural normalization; (2) a divestment campaign to encourage Australian businesses and shareholders to divest from Israel as well as to ensure that Israeli companies are not welcome in Australia; and (3) a campaign which seeks to pressure the Australian government to implement sanctions against the Israeli state rather than continuing its commercial, military and diplomatic relationship with it as long as Israel continues to violate international law and the human rights of the Palestinian people.

Over the last decade, there has been a significant increase in trade relations and military ties between Australia and Israel. In 2003, Australian merchandise exports to Israel, which included coal, live animals, aluminium, machinery components, were worth around US\$198 million whilst imports from Israel, including telecommunications equipment, fertilisers, agricultural technology and pearls and gems, are valued at around US\$463 million. According to the Australian Trade Commission, in 2006-2007, the annual bilateral trade between Australia and Israel totalled around A\$750 million, with a trade deficit favouring Israel. The major Israeli exports to Australia included IT/telecommunication equipment, metals, plastics and medical/optical equipment, as well as precious stones.⁶

The Israel Trade Commission (ITC) website notes that there are currently 58 Israeli companies with local offices in Australia. These include companies such as Soda Club, based in Ma'ale Addumim, the largest of Israel's illegal Jerusalem settlements, as well as Israel's largest financial institution, Bank Hapoalim, and other financial institutes such as Bank Leumi.⁷

The ITC also notes that currently leading food and retail chains in Australia, such as Coles, Woolworths and Franklins are also stocking a range of Israeli food and wine products, including those produced in the illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied West Bank. In 2007, Australian retail giant Big W, with its over 200 stores around the country, signed a 3 year contract with Beigel and Beigel, an Israeli sweets and pretzel distributor based in the illegal Israeli industrial

Mock separation wall set up by Palestine solidarity activists attracts attention of hundreds of passersby on a busy Melbourne street. November 2007. Photo by Sonja Karkar.



settlement of Barkan in the Salfit governorate of the occupied West Bank. Currently, Beigel and Beigel is the second largest supplier of pretzels to Australia, holding 20% of the market, with the pretzels being marketed by the Australian company Trialia Foods.⁸

On the export side of the equation, the Israeli company, Guild Enterprise Ltd (whose Australian HQ is based in Queensland) has become the primary exporter of Australian products to Israel, such as Sanitarium health foods and Arnott's biscuits, including Tim Tams. According to the Australian Trade Commission (Austrade) website, "many young Israelis come to Australia after their national service to study or relax, and they have come to develop a taste for the Tim Tam and spread the word back in Israel and in the Palestinian Territories."⁹

Subsidiaries of international companies which invest heavily in Israeli companies and occupation infrastructure, are also operating in Australia. For example, Connex, which is the name used by the French based Veolia Environment for their transport operations in Australia, in 2002 won the tender, along with Alstrom, to build the light rail which will service many of the illegal Israeli settlements surrounding East Jerusalem. The system will also operate feeder stations for settler traffic from Ma'ale Adumin to the Jordan Valley. As the Stop the Wall campaign notes "the light rail project plays a key role in sustaining the settlements and ensuring they become a permanent fixture upon Palestinian land."¹⁰

In Australia, Connex operates the entire Melbourne suburban train work and also runs Sydney's light rail/monorail system under contract from Metro Transport and has a large bus network which it runs in Sydney's southern suburbs. In Perth, Connex also operates the Southern Coast Transit bus line, while in Brisbane it runs buses using the former National Bus Company's fleet. While Palestine solidarity activists in Melbourne have previously run an awareness-raising campaign around the role of Connex in sustaining the Israeli occupation, the campaign has not been a comprehensive or systematic one.

The bilateral commercial relations between Australia and Israel are set to increase in 2008. According to a September 2007 report in the *The Australian*, an expected Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Australia and Israel will likely result in a "surge in Israeli hi-tech investment and the transfer of world-leading military technology."¹¹ According to the newspaper, Australian imports of classified defence technology were valued at around A\$14 million in 2006, but with the FTA set to be signed in 2008, this will increase with a "closer defence relation between the two countries involving high-end robotic technology, smart missiles and unmanned aerial drones - military areas in which Israel is a world leader." The bilateral defence agreement between the Australian and Israeli government will also involve "training exchanges involving Australian defence personnel and its Israeli counterpart."

In addition to the boycott of Israeli consumer goods and divestment from Israeli companies and attempts to break trade and military ties with Israel and place sanctions on the Zionist state for its apartheid policies, we will also need to work towards developing the academic and cultural boycott of Israel. This academic and cultural boycott, which has been gaining international momentum over the last two years, also has the potential to flourish in Australia. The key component in the development of this campaign is gaining the support of progressive unions around Australia. Involving progressive Australian unions, however, will take time and well-planned work. It will require us to systematically approach the various unions and to patiently explain the situation in Palestine, not only in terms of the impact that Israel's apartheid and occupation policies have on Palestinian workers and their families, but the impact that these policies have on the human and civil rights of all the Palestinian people.

In Australia, as the campaign will be starting almost from scratch, we will need to present the labor movement with not only relevant facts and information, but we will need to pace ourselves. As the campaign will be in its infancy, the first step for Palestine solidarity activists will be simply to get unions to begin to consider discussing this issue and campaign inside

their unions. While we do not want to rush the campaign, we should however not be shy in highlighting the brutality of the Israeli occupation and the human suffering of Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza, as well as the systematic racist and apartheid nature of Israeli policies on both sides of Green Line and the illegal denial of refugee return.

A final plank of the BDS campaign will also be to gain the support of Indigenous Australians for the struggle of a fellow indigenous people. In Australia, in the past, there has been collaboration at a range of levels between Aboriginals and Indigenous Rights campaigners and Palestinians and Palestine solidarity activists. This, however, has not been consistent or widespread. An important part of the Palestine solidarity campaign over the next years in Australia should be to foster and develop this joint solidarity. Developing the indigenous relationship between both our peoples will be an important advance for both Palestinians and Indigenous Australians in our joint struggle against dispossession and ongoing colonialism of our lands.

The development of a systematic BDS campaign in Australia, along with joint solidarity work, will go a long way to building a strong campaign to end Israeli apartheid, while also allowing us to highlight the racist and apartheid policies employed by the Israeli Zionist state both in the OPT and Israel. It will allow us to campaign more concretely for an end to the brutal occupation of the Palestinian people and to pressure our own government to end its support for Israel's colonialism, occupation and apartheid. With the ongoing displacement and forced exile of the Palestinian people now in its 60th year, now more than ever is the time to begin the campaign.

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Endnotes

See Online Version at: <http://www.badil.org/al-majdal/al-majdal.htm>

BDS in Belgium

by Jan Dreezen

Boycott

The boycott campaign in Belgium was started in 2000 by a small but dynamic Palestine solidarity group called Centrum voor Ontwikkeling, Documentatie, Informatie Palestina (CODIP: Centre for Development, Documentation and Information on Palestine). CODIP had emerged from Palestine solidarity efforts active in Belgium through the Limburgs Palestina Komitee (LPK) founded in 1989, and which had evolved into CODIP by 1998. In 2002, the boycott campaign was taken up by the coordinating committees of the Flemish and French speaking NGO's and social organisations: Actie Platform Palestina (APP) and Association Belgo-Palestine (ABP).



COBI Boycott Campaign Poster

More on the Campaign at:

Belgium Boycott Campaign Information Page

www.boycotisrael.info

Association Belgo-Palestinienne

www.association-belgo-palestinienne.be

At first, the campaign was primarily focused on raising awareness within Belgian society, but quickly evolved into a systematic effort to call on Belgian consumers to stop buying Israeli products, Belgian shopowners to stop stocking these products, and the Belgian government to stop allowing these products in to begin with. Materials such as leaflets, posters, postcards and other educational tools were prepared and widely disseminated. Three different posters were designed, and soon university students and others began to treat them as collector items – it became quite fashionable for university and college students to have all three posters hanging in their dormitory room. The postcards used the same images, and were directed at the Belgian Foreign Ministry calling for an end to imports from Israel; other postcards were directed at larger retail chains, some of which agreed to meet with representatives of the Platform, although ‘consumer choice’ arguments meant that these meetings did not bring about much in the way of tangible results. As a result of research commissioned by member groups of the APP on the effect of the occupation on Palestinian water and agriculture, the major thrust of the campaign targetted Israeli agricultural produce.

Different local groups and chapters were initiated and mobilized, setting up a support structure for the campaign throughout the country. At the high point of the campaign in November 2003, over 50 local groups participated in actions at the entrance gates of supermarkets and collected over 10,000 signatures against the sale of Israeli products. The momentum of the campaign was devastated when Zionist organizations interfered to counter the campaign later that year. Pressure from a large Zionist organisation in the United States against one of the main NGO's involved in the APP resulted in this NGO's withdrawal from the campaign. This triggered other withdrawals from several of the other large organizations bringing about an end to that chapter of the campaign in Belgium, although several organizations continued to advocate a limited boycott of settlement products.

Some of the local committees and a few organisations involved in the campaign were determined to keep the campaign alive. A new coordinating committee was set up in the Flemish-speaking part of Belgium by the Vlaams Palestina Komitee. One



Belgian BDS Activists confront a Carmel-Agrexco Delivery Truck.
Photo Courtesy of COBI.



A Supermarket picket in Belgium. Photo courtesy of COBI.

action that the Komitee launched was a boycott day of action at the end of 2004. On this day, local groups organized demonstrations at the entrance of supermarkets to collect signatures of customers on a petition directed at the shop management demanding an end to the sale of Israeli goods. The group also distributed stickers that said “boycott Israel: koop geen vruchten van bezetting (don’t buy the fruits of occupation)” that people stuck on to Israeli produce on the supermarket shelves. Since then, the day of action has become an annual event, and has evolved into a week of action.

In 2005, 2006 and the spring of 2007, the week of action targeted 10 supermarkets. Later in 2007 the campaign got a serious boost; people active in the campaign came together into “Coordination Boycott Israel” (COBI) and the group set out to mobilise new local committees and expanding the activities to the French-speaking parts of the country. As a result, the number of actions around supermarkets has increased, reaching 30 in the November 2007 week of action, which was launched with a symbolic picket that took place at the entrance to the headquarters of Delhaize, one of the main supermarket chains in Belgium.

The campaign continued to broaden and grow. When opportunities arose, and activists and volunteers came forward for proposed actions, COBI has coordinated *ad hoc* actions, such as one challenging the participation of an Israeli football team in a match in Belgium, and a letter of protest to a Belgian film festival featuring Israeli films. In February 2008, on the day before Valentine’s day, a symbolic picket took place at the Liege cargo-airport, the European hub for fresh vegetables, fruit and flower imports from

Israel. BDS campaign materials were distributed to truck drivers and workers in the terminal.

Belgian BDS activists are planning to intensify the campaign before the end of 2008. A new campaign poster and leaflet have been developed stating “Boycott Apartheid Israel” with accompanying “Boycott Israel” T-shirts and other outreach materials. Plans are ready for actions against Israeli-imported dates that will take place during the month of Ramadan (starting in early September) and for this year’s week of action at the end of November which will focus on the supermarkets.

In order to mobilise more support for our actions, activists in COBI begun an effort to enlist organizations and well-known personalities to sign the Palestinian civil society BDS call. This effort started in 2007, and so far 30 organizations and 60 personalities have signed on. The plan is to gather as many of these endorsements as possible, and use these endorsements, particularly the ones from famous celebrities, to attract more attention to the campaign from the general public and the media.

Divestment & Sanctions

Beside boycott campaigns, COBI is also preparing a concrete divestment campaign against a Belgian company investing in Israel. We hope to be able to convince the NGO coordinating committees on Palestina (APP and ABP) to engage in this campaign or in similar campaigns against other investors from Belgium.

The two coordinating committees APP and ABP are the main bodies in Belgium calling for sanctions against Israel. The main aim is to stop the preferential Israel-EU trade agreement through which Israeli goods can be imported by the EU without import tax; a demand fully supported by COBI. Several letter-writing campaigns have been launched to pressure ministers and political party leaders to advocate ending Israel's preferential trade status with the EU. There is also a call from Belgian peace organizations to stop the supply of Belgian weapons to Israel, but this campaign is in its early stages.

Reflections About the BDS Campaign in Belgium

One of the main obstacles BDS campaigners have faced is the tremendous difficulty of getting coverage for Palestine solidarity activities in the national media. It is unclear why this is the case, since even for visual and attractive actions featuring celebrity names the media has not shown up.

Other obstacles have been the reticence of supermarket management to take principled positions on the goods that they stock, hiding behind the argument that it is up to customers to make an informed choice: buy or refuse Israeli goods. Activists have also experienced varying levels of police interference and harassment during actions at the entrance of supermarkets, but this has not had the effect of ruining these actions or resulted in any serious consequences for the picketers. In the city of Antwerp a Zionist group disrupts our actions by holding "buy Israeli goods" actions at the same time as the boycott actions.

On the labour front, contact with workers' unions has been slow. Some sectors of the labor movement have good working relationships with Palestinian counterparts, but the idea of boycott resolutions and introducing divestment policies is not yet very high on their agenda.

One aspect of the campaign in Belgium is to recruit signatories to the Palestinian civil society call, which since it was issued has become a global call for BDS. On the global BDS movement website one can see the number of people and organisations that have signed the call, a list that continues to grow. In Belgium, we have found it useful to give organizations and individuals the opportunity to first sign at country level, a way to build links with these people locally. As such, we started an effort to sign the Call on our website in Belgium, and later on we will transfer their names to the international site. In the near future we will add at least 20 organisations and 50 personalities to the international list.

Reflections on the Global BDS Campaign

One thing that we have found to be essential is that Palestinian visitors who are on speaking tours, or who are meeting with civil society or political officials here should always give attention to the fact that BDS is widely supported by Palestinians as an important way of action on the international level. When Palestinian visitors did not speak about the campaign and its centrality, they left the impression among the audiences that the BDS campaign is not very important.

Perhaps the most essential need of the campaign in order to move forward is better coordination between campaign organizers in different countries on the European and global level. Such coordination can and should spread to coordinated actions such as international days of action against flowers imported from Israel on the eve of Valentines Day; or in Ramadan against sale of Israeli dates; or to an international "supermarket action day" to target supermarkets selling Israeli products building on the Belgian experience.

In working towards the isolation of Israel until it respects and implements its obligations under international law, we in Belgium have learned many lessons the hard way. However, the most important lesson has been that despite all obstacles and setbacks, we must persevere.

**Jan Dreezen is a member of Coordination boycott Israel (COBI)*

Brazil: The Palestine Solidarity Movement and BDS

by Arlene E. Clemesha

More on the campaign at:

Movimento Palestine para Todos (MOPAT)
www.palestinalivre.org

MOPAT Protesters call for BDS and the return of Palestinian refugees at a Land Day demonstration in São Paulo, 30 March 2008. Photo courtesy of Arlene Clemesha.



In Brazil, the first motion in favor of the Palestinian Civil Society Call for Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions against the State of Israel until it complies with international law (BDS) came a week after the Call itself. On 18 July 2005, at the 50th Congress of the National University Teachers' Union (50o CONAD, ANDES), the members of the union voted in favor of an institutional boycott of Israel. A year later, the Central Trade Union (CUT) youth national congress passed a BDS motion in February 2006. These initiatives did not develop into systematic campaigns, but remained as isolated actions which hardly had the chance to develop into a debate or grow into a movement before being overcome by a more urgent need: to act against the Mercosur-Israel Free Trade Agreement (FTA). Since 2006, the aim of nullifying the Mercosur-Israeli FTA has been the main goal of the BDS campaign in Brazil.

The Mercosur-Israel FTA negotiations started in 2005, but did not become publicly known until 2006. On 9 June 2006, during its 9th Annual Congress, the CUT approved a motion against the FTA proposal.¹ The following month, just as Israel began its brutal assault on Lebanon the Agreement was on the Mercosur agenda, about to be signed.² In the span of a month, major Brazilian social movements in the city of São Paulo, and several political parties, joined forces to demand that the Brazilian government back out of and oppose the Mercosur-Israel FTA. The Agreement was not signed, it was postponed, but the movement against the FTA did not develop into an organized campaign, and fizzled out with the end of the war.

Mercosur-Israel negotiations were quietly resumed, and when the FTA was in fact signed, one year-and-a-half later on 18 December 2007, the attention given to the affair was no more than a few marginal endnotes in the press. There was in fact no organization –neither Palestinian, Arab, nor any of the human rights/left-wing movements that had taken part in the movement against the war- monitoring the negotiations between the Mercosur and the State of Israel, let alone working to build a campaign against it.

The Mercosur-Israel Free Trade Agreement

The Mercosur (Mercado Común del Sur, i.e. Southern Common Market) was created in 1991, and includes Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay. Venezuela is in the process of becoming a full member while Chile, Bolivia, and more recently, Colombia and Ecuador have associated member status. The Mercosur is usually presented as a barrier against the expansion further south of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and of bi-lateral trade agreements between the United States and South American countries. That is, as a means of combating the economic takeover, and political influence of the United States in South America. But some analysts describe the Mercosur as a ‘semi-fiction,’ or a ‘partial unity’ of a limited number of economic groups, belonging mainly to the auto and petroleum industries, and controlled by North American and European firms (which in this case are no innocent partners in the Mercosur-Israel FTA).

The Mercosur bloc represents a combined GDP of \$1.2 trillion and a population of 240 million people, and this FTA is the first free trade agreement to be signed by the Mercosur. Without the FTA, total trade between the Mercosur and Israel amounts to \$1.1 billion. Brazil is the main economy and largest country in the bloc. In 2006, Brazil exported \$261 million to Israel and imported \$458 million. Brazil is already Israel’s second commercial partner in the American continent, having increased bi-lateral trade from \$449 million in 2002, to \$746 million in 2006.³ During the first three months of 2007, 53% of Israel’s imports from Brazil were agricultural products and food; 13% were crude metals. During the same period, of Brazilian imports from Israel, 64% of the products were chemicals, and 23% were machinery and high technology.⁴ There are almost 200 Israeli companies in Brazil, which produce mainly high-tech equipment. 42 produce security devices, and 17 produce medical equipment.⁵

Since the year 2000, high technology has been Israel’s main export.⁶ In 2006, this sector represented almost 50% of the exports, including electronic and communication equipment, computer, control and supervision technology, and airplanes. More than half of Israeli industrial production is exported, and 66% of these exports are in the high tech sector, whereas only 39% of low tech production is exported.⁷ While Brazil imports mainly high technology, communication and security devices from Israel; it exports agricultural products and metals. Needless to say, Israel will gain more from this FTA than Brazil or any other Mercosur country. What should be stressed is that we are importing the same high technology, advanced communication and security devices that are developed by Israel to feed its war industry against Palestinian and neighboring Arab people.

The objective of the FTA is clearly to legitimize, and strengthen Israeli and US influence in South America, a fact that goes directly against the alleged “progressive foreign policy” of Brazil. In fact, some political analysts have stressed that in face of relatively small economic importance, for Brazil or any other Mercosur country, the true nature of the Mercosur-Israel FTA is that of political support for the Israeli regime -consequently, a tacit, and sadly very effective, support for the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories. Before granting any country freedom for capital and commodity exchange, the Mercosur itself states that there must exist freedom and human rights for the people.

A New Organization: Mopat

In January 2008 a group of young Palestinian activists built a new organization in São Paulo, called *Movimento Palestine para Todos* (Mopat: “Palestine for All Movement”). Their main concerns, which eventually formed their basis of unity, were: 1) to support the Palestinian refugees that had arrived from Iraq a few months before, and who were receiving no attention from the Brazilian government and poor quality assistance, with no one to speak to them in Arabic to understand their needs; 2) to build a campaign to stop the FTA from being ratified. For this, the organization has, from the beginning, counted on significant support from the Palestinian Grassroots Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign (Stop the Wall), and other organizations in Palestine.

A briefing against the FTA sent by Stop the Wall was translated into Portuguese and distributed; and the Open Letter to the Brazilian People, from the BDS National Committee was translated and published in the first issue of Mopat’s newspaper.

*"Free Palestine" graffiti on the streets of São Paulo.
Photo courtesy of Arlene Clemesha.*



26,000 copies of the newspaper were printed and distributed, a significant achievement given that for many years the Palestinian movement in Brazil had not produced anything of this sort. The newspaper has been distributed to social movements and Palestinian communities in several cities in the country, mainly São Paulo, Brasília, Santa Maria, Santa Catarina, and Goiânia.

The campaign against the FTA actually began on 18 February, at a meeting called by Mopat, and attended by civil society organizations (including the landless workers' movement MST), trade unions and representatives of the political party PSOL ("Socialism and Liberty," formed after a split from the Workers Party, PT). After some debate, the organizations agreed that the objective should be to demand the annulment of the FTA and not simply a ban against settlement products. To stop the ratification process, the campaign needs to gain support in the National Legislative Assembly (Brazil's parliament in Brasília) and Senate, which are the legislative bodies responsible for the ratification process of the FTA.⁸

The first step in this direction was taken by PSOL state deputy for São Paulo, Raul Marcelo, who brought together a parliamentarian front against the FTA at the São Paulo Legislative Assembly (ALESP, Assembléia Legislativa do Estado de São Paulo) on 10 April 2008. PSOL municipal deputies have also led the effort to organize local municipal council fronts to challenge the FTA. On 19 June, deputy Raul Marcelo presented a proposal for a motion against the FTA addressed to President Lula, and leaders of both legislative houses in Brasília at the ALESP Human Rights Commission. However, the Commission was not willing to approve this motion against the whole of the FTA, and amended Raul Marcelo's original text. A letter from Marcelo explaining the decision of the Commission stated that "the original text of the proposal, which appealed for efforts to be made against the ratification of the whole of the FTA, was changed by the other members of the Commission, as a condition for their approval. The new text requires that 'no tax exemption should be granted to products made in or coming from territories and settlements considered illegal by the International Court of Justice.'"

On 21-22 June, Mopat held the second National Meeting of Palestinian Communities and Movements, attended by Palestinian representatives from five different states, several local organizations as well as trade unions. The workshop about the campaign against the FTA discussed several aspects of the campaign, including the fact that it should be viewed as part of the global BDS campaign. The following steps were suggested and voted on: 1) to continue opposing the whole of the FTA (in conformity with the approach of the global BDS campaign); 2) to publish the next Mopat newspaper as a special issue

against the FTA; 3) to visit the Arab parliamentary league in Brasilia (including almost 80 parliamentarians of Arab origin and/or who have taken positions in solidarity with the Arab-Palestinian freedom struggle), left-wing deputies, anti-ALCA leaderships, and Human Rights Commissions in Brasilia. The campaign is at the stage of speaking to political leaderships and gathering support of social movements and civil society organizations in São Paulo and in the capital. The ratification process itself is still at the preliminary stage at the *Casa Civil*. It has not reached the National Congress yet, which is due to happen in the coming months.

Challenges Faced by the Palestine Solidarity Movement

To understand the difficulties faced by the Palestinian movement in Brazil, specifically the campaign against the Mercosur-Israel Free Trade Agreement (FTA), the first aspect to consider is that the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs upholds a position of 'equal treatment to both sides of the conflict,' as if this would guarantee the country a neutral and respectable position in what is viewed as a 'two-sided' - equal sided - conflict. Moreover, the political line defended by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs is of friendship and engagement with 'both sides.'

While Brazil has an alleged tradition of siding with oppressed nations and peoples, in practice the government prefers to act as a mediator (not only in the Palestinian case, but in conflicts within Latin America). In fact, the government does not act as if it acknowledges the need to support the Palestinian struggle for self-determination. The Palestinian struggle is simply substituted in the minds of our ministers and political leaders by what is called the 'Israeli-Palestinian conflict.'

Therefore, when civil society leaderships defend the idea of simply 'reforming' the FTA, by means of an amendment that excludes settlement products from the agreement and, proposes, as compensation, a Free Trade Agreement between the Mercosur and the Palestinian representatives, this is consistent with Brazilian foreign policy of ignoring the power imbalance and dynamic of ongoing oppression, colonization and apartheid implemented by Israel against the Palestinians.

What is needed in Brazil, are actions, lobbying and campaigns aimed at bringing about a change in the governmental stance; a change in the attitude of pretending that it is acceptable and legitimate for a government to state its support for 'both sides' as if this were equivalent to supporting the Palestinian struggle for self-determination and sovereignty. In other words, support given to Israel, which directly contributes to the regime of occupation, to the strangling of Palestinian economy, ghettoization of the Palestinian population, and the denial of the return of Palestinian refugees cannot be compensated or counter-balanced by support given to the PA.

To change this distorted view, and achieve real support - from the people as well as the Brazilian government - for international pressure on Israel and support for the realization of the Palestinian people's inalienable rights, it is important to build campaigns around the correct principles and demands. Regarding the campaign against the FTA, this can only be achieved by presenting it as part of the BDS movement: a worldwide movement against all commercial, financial, scientific and cultural relations with the state of Israel until it complies with international law.

Although a campaign that succeeds in stopping the FTA will not eliminate bi-lateral trade with Israel, it will expose the immoral and illegitimate character of such relations, which is the ground needed to advance an effective BDS campaign.

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Endnotes

See Online Version at: <http://www.badil.org/al-majdal/al-majdal.htm>

Turtle Island: Challenging the Israeli Settler Colony from the Canadian Settler Colony

by Andrew Hugill & Hazem Jamjoum

More on the campaign at:

Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid - www.caiaweb.org

Tadamon! - <http://tadamon.resist.ca>

Coalition pour la justice et la paix en Palestine - www.cjpp.org

Palestine House Educational and Cultural Center - www.palestinehouse.com

Not in Our Name: Jewish Voices Opposing Zionism - www.nion.ca

Canadian Arab Federation - www.caf.ca

Sumoud Political Prisoners Solidarity Working Group - <http://sumoud.tao.ca>

Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights - www.sphr.org

Al-Awda Toronto: Palestine Right of Return Website - www.al-awda.ca



A protester displays confetti used in the disruption of the Israeli ambassador's talk (9 April 2008). Photo by Ion Etxebarria courtesy of Tadamon!

The Canadian state is one of the inheritors of Europe's genocide and ethnic cleansing in the Americas. In the face of their ongoing struggle for sovereignty and self-determination, the indigenous people of Turtle Island (the name of this land according to many of its indigenous peoples) have faced wave after wave of expulsion from their land, biological and military warfare, systematic erasure of their identity and way of life, and an accumulation of government policies aimed at finishing them off as peoples and taking what is left of their land and its resources. It should come as no surprise that when the architects of apartheid in South Africa looked to study effective examples on which to base the political exclusion and economic exploitation of South Africa's indigenous peoples; they took Canada as their main case study.

Contrary to its reputation as a peace-keeper, Canada's foreign policy has reflected its domestic colonialist policy, as most recently evidenced in Haiti and Afghanistan. In these countries, Canadian troops and other personnel serve to support and sustain brutal military occupations invariably spearheaded by the United States. Consistent with this has been the growing economic, diplomatic, military, and research cooperation and support between Canada and Israel over the past four decades. This article provides a brief outline of Canadian cooperation and support for Israel's apartheid regime, and the growing movement within Canada for boycotts, divestment and sanctions against Israel demanding that it dismantles its apartheid system, ends its military occupation, and implements the right of Palestinian refugees and IDPs to return.

Canada and Israeli Apartheid

Historically Canada has stood behind Israel since the creation of the Zionist state in 1948. This support grew rapidly in the 1990s after the signing of the Oslo agreements. In 1997, the Canadian government signed the Canada Israel Free Trade Agreement (CIFTA); the only FTA Canada has signed with a partner outside of the western hemisphere. It has been an enormous boon to Israel; from 2000-2005 the value of Israeli exports to Canada exceeded Canadian exports to Israel, reversing the trend from the 1990s. In the same period, average annual Israeli foreign direct investment in Canada exceeded that of Canada in Israel. In other words, this is an agreement that has benefited Israel and helped support the Israeli economy.

Another agreement, the Canada Israel Industrial Research and Development Foundation, provides seed money for Israeli-Canadian joint research and development. Over 200 companies have been funded by this scheme which includes military research. The Canadian government now boasts that Israel is its longest standing technology partner. A similar agreement between the province of Ontario and the Israeli government was also signed by the province's Premier Dalton McGuinty and Ehud Olmert in 2005.

Prominent Canadian business people have been among the staunchest supporters of the Israeli government. Heather Reisman and Gerry Schwartz, majority owners of Indigo Books, set up a fund called the Heseg Foundation for Lone Soldiers that provides scholarships and other support for individuals who have chosen to go to Israel and serve in the Israeli military. In 2006, Reisman and Schwartz attended a ceremony at an Israeli military base where they were awarded the gun of an Israeli soldier killed in Lebanon.

In March 2006, just after the democratically elected Hamas party formed its government, the Canadian government raced to become the first government to impose a siege on the Palestinians living under military occupation. It continues its full support for Israel's barbaric siege against the people of Gaza. Over 1.5 million Palestinians now live in an 'open-air' prison - with all entry of essential goods, electricity, water and medicines controlled by Israel. While Israel starves the population of Gaza, Israeli leaders are welcomed with open arms in Ottawa.

On 23 March 2008, the Canadian government signed a high level agreement with the Israeli government to share 'border management' and security information. These types of agreements mean close cooperation and information sharing between Israeli and Canadian intelligence, racial profiling, and harassment of Palestinian activists and their supporters. During Israel's bombardment of Lebanon in 2006, which killed over 1100 and displaced over one-million Lebanese civilians, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper described Israel's actions as 'measured and justified' and opposed calls for a cease-fire.

Canada continues to give charitable/tax-deductible status to the Canadian arms of Zionist fundraising organizations such as the Jewish National Fund (JNF). The JNF owns land in Israel, mostly the rightful property of Palestinian refugees and internally displaced people, which it is mandated not to sell or lease to non-Jews. By restricting the control of land to people from only one ethnic group, the JNF is a key institution of the Israeli apartheid regime. Funds from the Canadian JNF established a "park" over the ruins of three Palestinian villages of Imwas, Yalu and Beit Nuba which were demolished and depopulated by Israel in 1967. This park is called Canada Park and the 10,000 original inhabitants, like all Palestinian refugees, are barred from returning to their land. The Canadian government helps to subsidize this racism and ethnic cleansing by giving charity status to the JNF.

Early Years of the Intifada

After the Oslo agreements, Canadian society was one of many around the world lured into the illusion of a peace process between Israel and the Palestinian leadership. While many critics pointed to the explosion of settlement activity, the marginalization of Palestinian citizens of Israel's struggle for political, economic and civil rights, as well as the struggle for the return of the refugees; it was not until the outbreak of the second Intifada that solidarity for Palestine was mobilized through organized initiatives.

From 2000-2005, Palestine solidarity in Canada largely centered on scattered awareness raising events and protests highlighting the continued escalation of Israeli war crimes against Palestinians. There was a diverse range in the politics and demands put forward by the different groups. Al-Awda, the Palestine right to return group in Toronto pushed to bring Palestinian refugee rights, and the rights of Palestinian citizens of Israel back into focus; the Montreal campus based Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights (SPHR) put forward a broader basis of unity that emphasized Palestinian human

rights in the occupied West Bank and Gaza. SPHR began to spread when in 2002 it called for a demonstration against the visit of Benjamin Netanyahu, and protesters successfully prevented him from speaking in Montreal. The Jewish Women's Committee to End the Occupation in Toronto, and Palestinian and Jewish Unity (PAJU) in Montreal re-launched the Women in Black experience by initiating weekly vigils in front of the Israeli consulate in their cities just after the outbreak of the Intifada, and these weekly vigils have been ongoing non-stop for the past eight years!

A key experience was that of the International Solidarity Movement (ISM) which enabled many activists to go to Palestine and see the reality of occupation with their own eyes. While many of those who took part in ISM trips disappeared back to their everyday lives, others – especially those active before their departure – returned with a renewed commitment to struggle for justice in Palestine.

Some groups were influenced by divestment campaigns on US campuses, and the Stop US Tax Aid to Israel Now (SUSTAIN) campaign; some incorporated an analysis of Israel as an apartheid state; others resisted any incorporation of Palestinian refugee rights and the rights of Palestinian citizens of Israel, characterizing such demands as 'divisive.' The effect was that BDS was limited to being one in a list of demands put forward by groups, and no single group systematically worked out a strategy to implement such a demand in practice. The major turning point came in July 2005 with the issuing of the Unified Palestinian Civil Society Call for BDS. The original call was signed by six Arab/Palestinian-led organizations in Canada: Al-Awda Toronto, Canadian Palestinian Foundation of Québec, Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights, Medical Aid for Palestine, the Arab Students' Collective at the University of Toronto and Sumoud, a political prisoners solidarity group; many more have since followed suit.

Toronto's Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid

Although armed with the BDS Call, groups in Canada faced difficulties reorganizing themselves so as to incorporate BDS as a central component of their work. Part of the difficulty was internal to the different Palestine solidarity groups, with some members seeing the change as undermining what their group had worked to build over the past five years, while others stressed that such a campaign would require more systematic planning and research especially in selecting appropriate Canadian targets on which to focus.

As the Palestine solidarity landscape reoriented itself, the incorporation of the BDS demand gradually spread through the various solidarity groups. An early attempt at BDS came from Al-Awda in the form of a campaign against the charitable status of the JNF. Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW), an event started by the Arab Students' Collective in February 2005, put it forward in that first year; and treated it as the central strategy for solidarity in the subsequent year. This was significant since the Week was attended by large numbers of solidarity activists due to the high profile of the event resulting from the media explosion it had caused in its first year. The main internal obstacles remained: the proliferation of solidarity groups meant that there was no space to think about the strategy and coordinated implementation of a systematic BDS campaign.

The change came when Ariel Sharon, then Prime Minister of Israel, was invited to speak at the 14 November 2005 United Jewish Communities (UJC) General Assembly in Toronto. When news of the invitation became public, the various solidarity groups came together to organize the response which included a legal appeal to deny entry to the notorious war criminal and mobilization to protest the invitation. Sharon did not end up attending the event, instead Paul Martin, the Prime Minister of Canada at the time, spoke to the conference stating that "Israel's values are Canada's values." The success of the demonstration against Sharon's visit was the result of a huge leap in organizing as the various groups put aside past debates and animosities and took a sincere anti-sectarian approach to focus on the work to be accomplished.

The groups that had come together to oppose the Sharon invitation met again after the protest, decided to continue working

together and to adopt BDS as the central focus, and to name themselves the Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid (CAIA). Palestinian activists played a key role in holding together the groups involved stressing the centrality of the 2005 BDS Call as providing the strategic focus for the Palestinian led international solidarity campaign against Israeli apartheid. As the call



Meeting of friendly Prime Ministers: David Ben Gurion and John Diefenbaker in 1961.

is action oriented, well defined, and authoritative it prevented the long and divisive theoretical debates on ‘Basis of Unity’ that most groups focus on during their formation. The demands of the 2005 BDS Call (an end to the Israeli occupation of all Arab and Palestinian lands, the release of all Arab and Palestinian political prisoners, full equality for Palestinian citizens of Israel, and the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and lands from which they were expelled from 1947 to the present day) also form the CAIA Basis of Unity.

The call for BDS was the needed framework to pull various groups together, to give concrete actions for people to take, and to discuss how people outside Palestine are implicated in what is happening and have a responsibility to act. The strategic demands of boycott, divestment and sanctions help to illustrate the powerful ties between North American / European capital and the Zionist state. The comparison with South Africa is not simply a theoretical framework to adopt, but also a model of action.

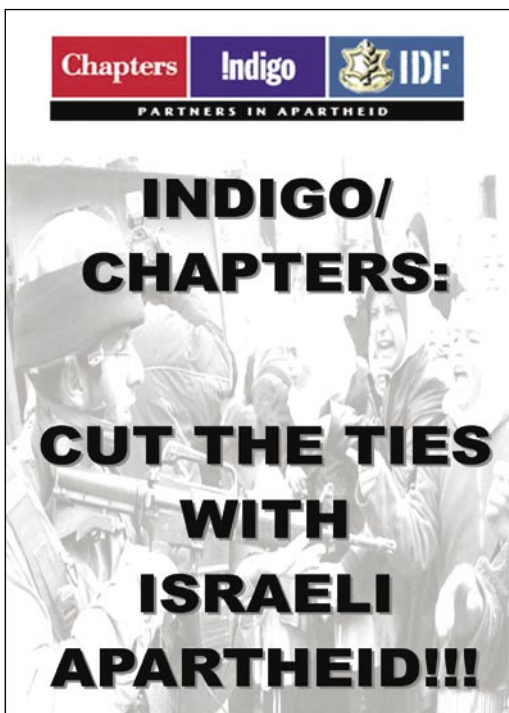
The BDS movement in Canada achieved its first major success in May 2006, when the Ontario branch of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) passed “Resolution 50” at its annual delegate’s conference. Adopted unanimously by the 900 delegates at the largest convention in the union’s history, the motion expressed support for the global campaign against Israeli apartheid, stated that the union would educate its members on the apartheid nature of the Israeli state and Canadian political and economic support for these practices, and declared that CUPE Ontario would participate in the international campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel until the realization of Palestinian self-determination. Most importantly, the motion highlighted the significance of the right of return of Palestinian refugees as a critical component of Palestinian self-determination.

CAIA Organizational Development

In its first major initiative CAIA organized the first conference in Canada around the call for BDS titled “The Struggle Continues: Boycotting Israeli Apartheid.” It was held in Toronto from 6-8 October 2006 and brought together over 600 activists around one challenge: How can we move global BDS campaigns against Israel forward? Smaller workshops at the conference developed strategies and cultivated networks around specific sectors of work such as: labor, campus, community organizing and faith-based groups. The committees of CAIA came out of these workshops. These committees initially carried out educational work in their different sectors. On campuses, for example, Students Against Israeli Apartheid (SAIA) started to take up the academic boycott of Israeli institutions; inside unions, Labor for Palestine focused on the conditions Palestinian workers were facing and the effects of the siege.

By organizing on a sectoral basis and in a non sectarian way, CAIA has been able to make huge gains in the breadth, depth

and impact of Palestinian solidarity work in Toronto. Many activists who came to the October 2006 conference from other cities took with them a renewed energy that manifested itself in the affiliation of organizations across the country to CAIA, and in some cases the formation of CAIA branches in other cities. Having a focus on BDS, clearly defined by the call from Palestine, aligns the work of CAIA with the international Palestinian led campaign and provides goals which transcend local sectarian divisions.



Chapters-Indigo boycott campaign poster

Simple Steps to Become Active in the Campaign in Canada

- ◆ Join local groups that campaign for Palestinian rights and in support of the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement against Israeli apartheid.
- ◆ Work within your school, university and union to pass resolutions against Israeli apartheid and in support of boycott and divestment.
- ◆ Lobby your member of parliament to end the charity status of the Jewish National Fund and to cancel all agreements between Canada and Israel.
- ◆ Don't buy Israeli products and complain to shop owners when you see these products on the shelf.
- ◆ Refuse to buy books from Chapters Indigo until their majority owners cut all ties with the Heseq Foundation.
- ◆ Educate your friends and family about Israel's policies and the Palestinian struggle for justice and return.

Another important element in the work of CAIA in particular, but the Palestine solidarity movement at large, has been the increasing emphasis on solidarity with local struggles. At the forefront of these is the struggle for the sovereignty and self-determination of indigenous peoples' on Turtle Island. This has not been simply in the words and statements made by CAIA, but also in the physical presence and logistical support of CAIA activists when requested by activists from indigenous communities struggling to protect and reclaim their land and resources. There is also a strong link between the Palestine solidarity movement and the anti-poverty struggle and the struggle for immigrant and refugee rights similarly manifested in words and deeds.

Labor for Palestine

The CAIA Labor committee, Labor for Palestine, is a network of rank and file labor activists involved in building the BDS movement within Canadian unions. Following the historic "Resolution 50" of CUPE Ontario, Labor for Palestine has worked to support the CUPE resolution and help CUPE members carry out rank-and-file education within the union. During 2007, over 25 training sessions were carried out in workplaces, conventions and council meetings across the province. Thousands of CUPE members have received educational materials on Israeli apartheid and participated in these training workshops.

Other developments in the labor sector were the inclusion of a commitment to internal education on Palestine in the "statement of principles" arising from the 2007 CUPE National Congress and the bringing forward of resolutions in the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation. Although the latter initiative was blocked, it succeeded in raising public awareness of the issues involved.

In March 2007, Labor for Palestine published a 100-page book entitled "Labor For Palestine: A Reader for Unionists and Activists." The book was launched at the Steelworkers Hall in Toronto, and contains discussion on the CUPE resolution, educational material for unionists and workers on the history of the Palestinian struggle and the situation of Palestinian workers. This has been an invaluable educational and training tool for establishing international solidarity committees in unions and promoting Palestine solidarity work.

A second major achievement came in April 2008 when the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) voted to become the first nation-wide union in North American history to join the BDS campaign. Resolution 338/339 was modeled on the CUPE Ontario resolution; it recognizes Israel as an apartheid

state and expresses CUPW's support for boycott and divestment from Israel. It was passed almost unanimously after nearly one hour of discussion on the convention floor. The fact that CUPW passed this resolution was particularly significant as a result of this union's history of international solidarity; during the South African apartheid years, CUPW was at the forefront of labor solidarity with South African workers and engaged in concrete actions such as the refusal to handle mail from South Africa.

Labor for Palestine most recently hosted an organizing conference for trade unionists that was held at the end of May 2008 to develop a coordinated cross-union strategy for BDS work. The conference featured leading activists from the Palestinian, South African, Haitian, Canadian, and US labor movements, and provided an opportunity to discuss strategies on how to move the campaign forward in the North American labor movement.

Students Against Israeli Apartheid

On the student front, SAIA has been actively organizing educational campaigns on campuses. A highlight of SAIA activities has been Israeli Apartheid Week, which in 2008 had grown to an international event held in over twenty cities across the world. Over two thousand people attended this year's activities in Toronto alone, participating in demonstrations, lectures and cultural events. IAW was also organized in Hamilton, Montreal, Peterborough, Ottawa, Fredericton, Vancouver and Victoria. IAW also saw the launch of High Schools Against Israeli Apartheid (HAIA), a new group of high school students active in support of Palestinian rights.

In June 2007, Zionist organizations mobilized the presidents of many Canadian universities to denounce the UK's University and College Union's resolution calling for a debate on academic boycott. Outraged that their university's president would endorse such a position, BDS student activists at Toronto's Ryerson University pushed their university administration to host a debate on academic boycott. The result was the first ever official debate on academic boycott of Israeli institutions at a Canadian university. Held in November 2007, the debate was chaired by Suhana Meharchand, a well-known and respected Canadian television personality of South African origin, and brought the issues of academic boycott and BDS to a large live and television audience. Demands for similar debates on other campuses have been legitimized by this ground-breaking event which has changed the political landscape in the University sector. In one absurd twist, the McMaster University administration banned the use of the phrase "Israeli apartheid!" SPHR activists in that university immediately organized a public debate in the central space of the campus that brought together over 500 students, faculty and staff to debate the issue. While several in attendance defended Israel against the charge of apartheid, it was made incredibly obvious that the administration had no right to stifle campus debate with such ridiculous methods as the banning of a phrase.

SAIA activists have paid particular attention to maintaining a constant presence on campuses through tabling, leafleting and posterage as well as building coalitions with other progressive student groups and unions. SAIA is also consciously attempting not to replicate the problem of most student groups that collapse after a few of the main organizers graduate - so there are constant educational workshops that involve all the student members, covering an analysis and discussion about Israeli apartheid, to skills such as public speaking and outreach.

In another landmark initiative, Highschoolers Against Israeli Apartheid (HAIA) held their inaugural conference in Toronto in February. This is the first formal gathering of secondary school students in Canada to discuss Israel's apartheid system and how people around the world can work to overcome it. The conference was organized by high school students who have been carrying out education campaigns in Toronto schools for the past twelve months. Working in the high-school sector has provided incredible momentum for the BDS campaign and inserted a new creative energy - the highschoolers have taken on banner and poster production for the broader campaign.

A breakthrough on the student front came in May 2008 when L'Association pour une Solidarité Syndicale Étudiante (ASSÉ), an important Québec-wide student federation representing over 42,000 students, voted to support the international campaign against



First BDS demonstration in Toronto at the end of Israeli Apartheid Week 2006.
Photo by John Bonnar (<http://johnb.smugmug.com>)

Israeli apartheid at a Québec-wide level. The resolution was adopted after several local assemblies at university and Cégep campuses across the province voted at a local level within general student assemblies to support the boycott campaign. ASSÉ's boycott resolution marks the first time that a major student union in Québec or Canada has voted to support the international boycott campaign opposing Israeli apartheid.

Throughout the 2007 / 2008 school year ASSÉ, in collaboration with Tadamon! Montreal, a leading organization of the BDS campaign in Québec, with support from Fédération nationale des enseignantes et enseignants du Québec (FNEEQ), Québec's largest college level teachers union, and the Québec Public Interest Research Group (QPIRG) organized multiple workshops throughout Québec at Cégep and university campuses bringing together hundreds of students for popular education workshops outlining the critical importance for Québec's student movement to stand

against Israeli apartheid. Among social movements across Canada, ASSÉ is a serious force, having launched and spearheaded a historic student strike across Québec, with over one-hundred student unions participating at the height of a strike that was rooted in a demand for a cancellation on all student debt and calling for free post-secondary education in Québec. The strike resulted in the reversal of the Québec government's plans to cut \$103 million from the student aid budget.

Film and Culture

Screening films to the general public has been a key part of CAIA's outreach strategy from the beginning. The size and diversity of audiences increased dramatically when film showings were moved from campus lecture halls to a popular Toronto documentary movie theater. Experience gained from this work has enabled the organization of the first ever Toronto Palestine Film Festival which will take place in October 2008.

In Montreal, Tadamon! has also used cultural performances as a central component of its BDS outreach with its "Artists Against Apartheid" events. The third and most recent edition of this lively concert crossing multiple musical styles from Jazz, to hip-hop, to folk was held this past May to commemorate the Nakba. As with the previous two events with the same title, it brought together high profile local artists under the BDS banner as part of the effort to popularize the campaign.

Consumer Boycott Campaigns

In December 2006 in the heat of the Christmas shopping spree, CAIA launched a consumer boycott campaign of Chapters and Indigo Books – the largest bookstore chain in Canada. The campaign demands an end to the financial support offered by the majority shareholders of Chapters and Indigo to Heseg - Foundation for Lone Soldiers which provides scholarships and other support to former 'Lone Soldiers' in the Israeli military. Lone Soldiers are individuals who do not live in Israel, have no family in Israel but decide to join the Israeli military. The launch involved distributing thousands of leaflets exposing the direct link between the majority owners and the Israeli military, while activists filled the background with anti-apartheid Christmas carols, a tactic borrowed from Palestine solidarity activists in the UK.

The campaign was picked up across the country, and despite little coverage in the mainstream press, the campaign has provided an excellent platform to educate the general public on Israeli apartheid and BDS through the distribution of over 50,000 leaflets

at pickets across Canada. The weekly vigils that were begun by the Jewish Women's Committee to End the Occupation now alternate between the Israeli consulate and one of the main downtown branches of the bookstore. To date, leafleting pickets of the bookstore have been regularly organized in Montreal, Ottawa, Vancouver, Halifax, Victoria and elsewhere. Creativity in the approach to the campaign has also continued, the launch of the last Harry Potter book, for example, witnessed CAIA activists colorfully dressed as characters from the book distributing leaflets to the hundreds in attendance while the bookstore's security personnel, on the lookout for pesky activists, walked around oblivious to the fact that the book-launch organizers had not paid the costumed leafleters to be there!

In addition to the Chapters-Indigo campaign, numerous BDS related actions are organized in cities and towns where BDS groups function when the need arises. JNF fundraising activities, events featuring the Israeli ambassador or other representatives of the apartheid state, state run alcohol vendors selling Israeli wines from the occupied Golan, and others are all seen as opportunities to reach out to the public, raise awareness about how the choices they make can either support or oppose the ongoing Nakba of Palestine, and directly challenge everyday practices in Canada that normalize cooperation and support for apartheid. Most recently, Vancouver's Canada Palestine Association started a campaign to boycott Israeli wines that have been sold at British Columbia Liquor Stores since December 2007. The campaign was successfully launched on 4 May 2008 with a picket against the Wine Festival in Vancouver that was co-organized by the Israeli Government and the Four Seasons Hotel and aimed to promote Israeli wines.

Future Directions

Over the last couple of years the concept of "Israeli Apartheid" has come from the fringes into the mainstream consciousness. The debate, in both mainstream and progressive circles has moved on from whether or not Israeli apartheid exists to the questions like "how bad is it?" and the extent to which it is analogous to South African apartheid, as well as the more important question of "what can we do about it?" BDS activists in Canada have played a significant role in causing this shift - on the local level at least. Now the movement is directing its energies towards moving public consciousness and acceptance of BDS from the fringes to the center.

Currently the front of this battle is on the University campuses where a space to debate academic boycott has been opened up. In this work the use of BDS in the struggle against South African apartheid provides not only a well known and accepted historic precedent but also an arsenal of strategies and tactics which can be adapted to the current circumstances. In addition to consolidating and extending its presence in the labor and student sectors, the campaign will be intensifying its work with educators in schools and universities to support them in their efforts to implement academic boycott and BDS in their institutions.



CAIA Activists dressed up as characters from Harry Potter crash the booklaunch. Photo courtesy of CAIA.

* Andrew Hugill is an organizer with the Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid (CAIA); Hazem Jamjoum is the Media & Information Officer of Badil. An earlier version of this article appeared in the May 2008 issue of *Left Turn*.

Catalonia's Commercial and Government Boycott Initiatives

by *Boicot Preventiu-Catalunya*

More on the campaign at:

Boicot Preventiu (Preventative Boycott)

www.boicotpreventiu.org

Portal of solidarity groups with Palestine from the Catalan territories

www.palestina.cat

Stop the War Platform

www.aturemlaguerra.org

BDS Campaign poster adorning the streets of Manresa. Courtesy of Boicot Preventiu.



Some of the commercial boycott experiences of the *Plataforma Aturem la Guerra* (Stop the war platform), *Boicot Preventiu* (Preventative Boycott) and the *Xarxa d'Enllaç amb Palestina* (Link Network with Palestine) in Catalonia can be valuable for activists in other places. Despite the fact that the peculiarities of each context have to be taken into account, these experiences illustrate the difficulties and dilemmas as well as the potential of these campaigns. Three different cases will be explained: the boycott of an Israeli product, a campaign for a Catalan company to stop selling Israeli products and two campaigns demanding that the public administration refrain from contracting Israeli product and services.

Eden Springs

Through several discussions about possible Israeli goods to target for a boycott, Eden Springs water provided an effective objective because it is a relatively public consumer product (water coolers for offices) through which we could reach a large number of people. It has enabled the campaign to highlight the importance of the water question in Israel's colonial policies, and a boycott has a potentially greater success rate if there is a direct relationship between the product and the problem being denounced (in this sense, the water company is a more adequate objective than, for example, swim suits). Finally, the fact that Eden Springs was a company of Golan settlers facilitated the boycott argument due to the clear unquestionable illegitimacy of Israel's occupation of this territory.

The public aspect of the campaign involved identifying the establishments that used Eden Springs water, to which we sent information about the campaign, providing contact details of alternative companies which offer the same services to facilitate switching over. This initiative had limited impact because we knew few clients (we discovered them by chance) and follow-up was not always possible.

A less public part of the campaign was directed at the bottling companies. We contacted the companies that bottle for Eden Spain to encourage them to terminate their partnership with Eden Springs. We managed to cause the companies of the sector to become concerned about their relationship with Eden and that Eden become aware of this concern. Consequently, Eden's web site concealed the origin of its water. The campaign has not resulted in ending the availability of local bottlers and distributors for Eden Springs.

A third aspect of the campaign focused on cutting off Eden's corporate connections from above. The Eden companies in European countries are subsidiaries of a mixed company, Danone-Eden, headquartered in Switzerland. A number of Spanish groups sent letters to Danone Spain demanding that they break their ties with Eden. As a boycott campaign has to be proportionate to the size and spread of a company, we sent a template letter in English to the European coordinator of NGOs for Palestine so that different European groups could send letters to each respective Danone subsidiary, to bring as much broad-based coordinated pressure on the corporation. We do not know if these letters were sent, and as far as we know, Danone has not issued any response.

One of the most important aspects of the campaign was connecting to the workers within the Eden bottling and distribution process. We spoke to the union representative of the factory workers of the Danone Group of Catalonia. They supported us and sent the information to other factories of the Group in Spain. We also spoke to the Agroalimentaria Federation, the main union in Catalonia (CCOO), who promised to forward the complaint to the union committee's European sector. To date, these initiatives have not yielded results and we fear that the solidarity of the unions is more symbolic than effective. Last but definitely not least, was communicating with the direct victims of Eden Springs: the people of the Golan. We wrote to an Arab NGO in the Golan introducing the campaign. Their enthusiastic response has continued to inspire the campaign and consolidate our commitment to these activities.

We believe that it is critical that all these initiatives are brought to the attention of Danone Spain, ranging from a client who cancels their subscription for reasons of conscience, to a conflict with a bottling company. The idea is that destabilizing the profit-making process for Danone may spur this large corporation into reconsidering their contract with Eden. It is important to bear in mind that in these types of boycotts, perceptions can often bear more weight than reality; in this case, introducing a perception of potential lost profit into the working of Danone. In addition, since Danone is a company with a benevolent corporate image, it will be sensitive to public campaigns.

The principal problems we encountered were the difficulties in identifying the clients, the minimum engagement of the unions and the incapacity to broaden the campaign to a coordinated regional European effort. Every initiative has to be proportionate to the extent of its objective. As such, pressurizing Danone requires a campaign on the European level or, at the very least, together with France.

Abacus

Abacus is a large book, stationery and games shop with fifteen big establishments throughout Catalonia and enormous pedagogical and cultural prestige. Several of the games sold in Abacus shops are manufactured in Israel. We chose Abacus as a target for the campaign because it is one of the few places with a continuous supply of clearly identified select Israeli products. Furthermore, since it is the biggest company in the sector, we thought it would be easier for them to adhere to the boycott than other smaller companies, as well as being able to reach the large number of people entering and leaving the stores each day. Finally, as it is a company with a certain cooperative character and which presents itself as socially responsible, we thought it would be more receptive to ethical arguments than others. In other words, since it defines itself in ethical terms, we could establish a dialogue on such a basis; something which is more difficult to do with other companies whose only motivation is profit.

We sent letters and documentation and we held meetings with Abacus, but the Israeli games stayed on the shelf. The company responded with typical arguments, the same used to justify engagement with Apartheid South Africa: the company is not responsible for government policies, or for alleged prejudice against innocent workers, nor the existence of human rights violations in other places in the world. Once dialogue had been exhausted, we increased the pressure and carried out coordinated actions of complaints and boycott campaign outreach targeting the majority of Abacus outlets. We have maintained contact with the company and have tried communicating with its workers, but Abacus has not yet changed its position.

Global BDS Movement

Despite the lack of tangible success, the campaign proved very useful in that it involved coordinating a multitude of local groups, involving people and new groups and spreading our message to large numbers of people. Above all, because the dialogue we maintained with the company permitted us to confront arguments, reflect and learn about argument aspects and tactics. We did not, however, achieve the objective of getting Abacus to stop selling Israeli products. We were more effective in the action than in the dialogue, we needed a more intense and sustained negotiation, we did not succeed in obtaining the solid support of influential NGOs and we did not work systematically on our contacts and relationships with the workers. Perhaps we put too much confrontational pressure on the company and failed to show them the boycott as an asset for them in terms of their image. We do not, however, consider the campaign as over and there are ongoing discussions about reactivating it in the very near future.

Government of Catalonia

The Library Consortium of Catalonia (CBUC), a public body, awarded the contract for the implementation of new software for the public library system to an Israeli company. Although we discovered this too late, we sent letters to the people in charge in CBUC and organized a protest in front of the Catalonia Library. Although we were unable to stop the contract award, we managed to generate an internal debate amongst the librarian professionals and create a debate through which Israeli products would no longer be seen as a neutral or apolitical option, rather a controversial option which rouses opposition. We anticipate this being taken into account in future situations where the possibility of contracting Israeli companies arises.

The Department of Education of the Government of Catalonia considered the purchase of Israeli technological material for the science classes of Catalanian secondary schools. This time we were able to discover the transaction in time and were able to present a complaint before the Department made any decisions about awarding the contract. We obtained the support of the main teaching unions and a meeting with the people in charge of the Department was covered by the media. In the end, the purchase did not take place. We do not know to what extent the ethical and solidarity reasons were decisive, but the fact that we managed to carry out a widely covered campaign, and that the end result was that the Department did not award the contract to the Israeli company qualifies this campaign as a success. Without doubt, the fact of creating solid alliances with important groups in the sector was decisive at the time our complaint was addressed.

BDS picket in front of Abacus retail outlet.



Conclusions

Every initiative requires different planning and discourse, depending on who is being addressed and what demands we are putting forward. In all the cases, it is important to assure the active involvement of important actors in the sector (unions, NGOs, workers). If possible, we recommend ensuring that the different levels of work are strategized and planned before launching the campaign, and if not, while the campaign develops.

The emphasis is more on the Israeli suppliers realizing that their products are rejected due to their government's policies than on a company not selling Israeli products. In other words, our aim is that the Israeli business sector perceives that Israeli occupation, colonization and apartheid are detrimental to their business, and as such they have a vested interest in ending them. It is not, therefore, about an economic war which aims to ruin Israel, but a war of ideas, a war for consciences which is fought in the economic field. It is important that an administration or a company does not buy an Israeli product as the fact of raising awareness that the Israeli trademark is controversial and arouses opposition. This is the first step in spreading consciousness about Israel's apartheid policies and practices and making the boycott against Israel effective.

BDS in England and Wales

by Zoë Mars



More on the campaign at:

Palestine Solidarity Campaign

www.palestinecampaign.org

Boycott Israeli Goods

www.bigcampaign.org

British Committee for the Universities of Palestine

www.bricup.org.uk

Campaign Against the Arms Trade

www.caat.org.uk

Stop Arming Israel

www.stoparmingisrael.org

Smash Edo

(campaign against arms components manufacturer)

www.smashedo.org.uk

Jews for Boycotting Israeli Goods

(via the BIG campaign site)

www.bigcampaign.org/index.php?=jews-for-boycotting-israeli-goods

A play on the famous Beatles album cover by Carlos Latuff.

This article summarizes the current major effort by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) and other Palestine solidarity groups in England and Wales to build a really dynamic and concerted BDS campaign across eight action areas for the next year. In the process of describing this, examples will be given of the range of past campaigning actions which are now being drawn together and stepped up, to achieve greater visibility and impact.

This initiative arose from a PSC workshop held in May 2008 with members from branches around the country and with representatives of sister organizations, especially Scottish PSC, British Committee for the Universities of Palestine (BRICUP), Interfaith Morally Responsible Investment (IMRI) and Jews for Boycotting Israeli Goods (JBIG). The immediate impetus was to respond as forcefully as possible to the Palestinian civil society BDS call of 9 July 2005.

The concrete aim of the workshop was to produce action proposals which were precisely defined, feasible and had identified timings and lead groups. A comprehensive Action Plan and Calendar for the year ahead emerged, which we are now committed to carrying through with as wide a network of support as possible. There will be a follow-up workshop in November in York to review progress and develop ongoing plans.

The following is a very brief summary of the eight Action Areas in the Plan. In all these, there will be links with all local branches, production of relevant literature and website revamps, and an organizational framework to check on progress and report back to such bodies as the PSC Annual General Meeting who will convene at the end of this year.

Consumer Action

Two work-groups took the lead examining the Boycotting Israeli Goods (BIG) campaign and the specific case of settlement



*BDS protesters picketing Tesco supermarket chain for its sale of Israeli products.
Photo courtesy of PSC-UK.*

produce, which is so graphic in its illegality that it can be used as an entry point for persuading the public and introducing the case for a general boycott. In addition to continued research and lobbying, there will be a relaunch of the BIG campaign in September, with letter-writing campaigns targeting the large supermarkets and the press from the first day of the month; letter-writing to local supermarkets from 7th; and a national week of action beginning on the 20th. These activities will build on regular work by local groups to picket and leaflet supermarkets and to clarify to the public that the new labeling of some goods as 'West Bank' is absolutely not evidence of their being genuinely Palestinian, but only of the EU's further complicity with Israeli occupation.

Complicit Firms

Intensive campaigns directed at Agrexco (Israeli agricultural produce exporter, much of its production coming from Jordan Valley settlements), Veolia (Jerusalem tramway servicing settlers in the occupied West Bank), Eden Springs (water from the occupied Golan), and Leviev Diamonds (owned by settlement construction mogul Lev Leviev), which have so far mainly been conducted in Britain by local groups in Brighton, Portsmouth, Scotland and – for Leviev – New York (USA), will become national campaigns with tailored lobbying of company headquarters, local outlets and clients (including shops, local councils and educational institutions). There will be seasonal focus on specific Agrexco products (e.g. dates during Ramadan), and continued direct actions. Since 2004, campaigners have targeted the Agrexco UK headquarters with repeated blockades, leading to an attempted prosecution by the company which led to a finding of 'no case to answer' after the protesters argued Agrexco's business was unlawful and demanded disclosure of the company's dealings with Israeli settlements.

EU-Israel Association Agreement

Much work has been done in the UK and elsewhere on the continent to oppose the EU-Israel Association Agreement and the 2005 'Technical Agreement' on settlement produce between the EU and the Israel Customs Cooperation Committee. This work will continue, and a coordinating group will research the economic benefits illicitly received by Israel (tariff concessions obtained by the mislabeling of settlement products). The research will also aim to quantify the cost of Israeli destruction of Palestinian infrastructure, especially to EC-supported projects and aid program. The campaign against the Association Agreement will involve lobbying UK Members of Parliament and EU parliamentarians to take positions against the Agreement, as well as preparing for the new reform treaty that is due in June 2009.

Academic Boycott

In May 2008, the University and College Union (UCU - representing 120,000 British academics) passed a new motion on Palestine. The motion calls on members of the union 'to consider the moral and political implications of educational links with Israeli institutions' and proposes that 'Ariel College, an explicitly colonizing institution in the West Bank, be investigated under the formal Greylisting Procedure,' a procedure used by the union against institutions which

contravene good labour relations practice. As a result of the resolution, there is new commitment by BDS activists to stand with academics who support the academic boycott and who have faced intensive pressure and legal threats from the Zionist lobby. The PSC will identify its academic members and, with BRICUP, will encourage them to undertake silent (personal) boycotting of Israeli institutions, and – also with students – to work on identifying their universities’ research and other links with Israel.

Cultural, Sporting and Professional Boycott

A precise formulation of the criteria for cultural boycott, based on the PACBI call, and a calendar of events for action through the year will be drawn up. This will cover: events such as the recent International Writers Fair in Jerusalem, and the recurrent fundraising events and performances for the Jewish National Fund; sporting events which include Israeli individuals or teams – such as the demonstration at Wembley last September for the qualifying match for the Euro 2008 football competition, and action against football clubs which promote Israel (e.g. Arsenal’s contract to advertise Israeli tourism); a template letter for artists accepting invitations to perform in Israel (such as Paul McCartney); and a ‘hall of shame and fame’ for artists, professionals and sports-people who visit and work with Israel or Israeli institutions, or who pull out of doing so, which will be compiled for the website.



Protesting Israel's participation in the Euro-cup football qualifiers at Wembley Stadium – 8 September 2007. Photo courtesy of PSC-UK.

Pension and Investment Funds

There will be work with institutions and with trade union officers and members, and with pension fund managers, to get information on the make-up of funds, and to call for divestment from firms complicit with the occupation as appropriate, following the work which has been pursued in the last few years by Methodist and Anglican churches.

Faith Group Action

Groups within the Christian, Muslim and Jewish communities, and their community associations, will work to support the consumer action, cultural, and divestment campaigns, with specific elements appropriate to their circumstances – e.g. calls for pilgrimages that benefit Palestinians, and boycotting of Israeli-initiated or Israeli-supporting religious and other visits. This work will be led by IMRI.

Trade Union Action

There will be continuing contact and actions with trade unions in Palestine, and encouragement of trade union twinning arrangements to underpin BDS actions (e.g. Palestinian workers can supply local information on complicit firms and their abusive practices). Seventeen of the major British trade unions are now affiliated to the PSC, and the affiliations have produced a Trade Union Advisory Committee to follow-up on the campaign. Whilst several of the unions have passed boycott motions, there is a lot of work to be done at grassroots level to identify possibly appropriate and feasible BDS options for each union in its own circumstances, and to increase support for these campaigns. This is advanced through education work among rank-and-file workers, and the provision of speakers and materials.



Nakba Commemoration demonstration calling for the return of Palestinian refugees. Photo courtesy of PSC-UK.



Postcard used in the consumer boycott campaign. Courtesy of PSC-UK.

churches, mosques, trade unions, the national and European parliaments, but also the twinning movement. At least a dozen Palestine Solidarity Campaign branches now have links with Palestinian towns or regions and these can provide powerful information (e.g. evidence of settlement produce being exported to British supermarkets) and can also strengthen support for BDS in Britain through the links with local schools and other institutions. We can never do enough BDS work, but we must do as much as we possibly can.

Progress with the Action Plan will be checked and supported by a central coordinating group, and actions reported through regular planning meetings and through the second Workshop in November mentioned above.

Lessons from the Campaign

The British experience with BDS suggests several lessons for the BDS movement. First and foremost is how important it is to keep up the momentum in each area of campaigning, and not to allow either an initial impact or setbacks to stop progress. Examples would be the work on the Caterpillar campaign where the first round of boycott and divestment campaigns made real impacts but seemed to reach a peak. We now realize we must return to this work because it is such a graphic case, along with action against other complicit firms. But perhaps we have to find some new approaches. An example of an apparent setback was the overturning of the original academic union boycott motion in 2005. The vituperative Zionist backlash could have been a real deterrent; it needed steady determined work to produce the new solidarity motions, and much follow-up work at the grassroots will be needed to push the academic boycott campaign forward.

The second lesson is the importance of drawing boycott campaigns in different areas together so they can reinforce each other, especially complicit firms, consumer boycott and divestment, also drawing in legal support wherever possible. And finally, there is the need to work through as many channels as possible: solidarity organizations,

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Euskal Herria: Boycotting Israel in Basque Country

by Patricia Lezama

On 30 September 2006 in Bilbao, we presented the Basque Initiative of Boycotting Israel at a press conference. The main purpose of this initiative, since it was launched on that day, has been to build a movement in Euskal Herria (Basque Country) behind the Unified Palestinian Civil Society Call for Boycotts, Divestment and Sactions (BDS) against Israel until it complies with international law; a call that was supported by over 170 Palestinian social, political and labor organizations.

Generally speaking, the Initiative aimed to call on Basque society, its public and private, cultural, athletic, academic, financial and commercial institutions as well as the workers' unions, political parties and all individual citizens of Euskal Herria to consciously boycott and disconnect themselves from all global Zionist institutions.



More on the campaign at:

Komite internazionalistak
www.herriak.org/ki

Middle East without Wars and Oppressions
www.mewando.org

BDS campaign poster.

The specific focuses of the campaign were as follows:

- To publicly reject the presence in our territory of any group, organization, institution, company, sports team, cultural or musical group coming from Israel, and to ensure that such groups would not feel welcome in our territory;
- To actively denounce any organization or institution that maintained any relations with the Zionist institutions until these relations are broken;
- To reject all Israeli goods, whether consumer, cultural, or other products;
- To compile and disseminate information on the Zionist-Israeli presence in our territory in any and all of its forms as part of mobilizing the people of our territory to all play an active role in the campaign to end Zionist profiteering and normalization in Euskal Herria, and to denounce Israel's occupation of the Palestinian homeland, and the denial of Palestinian refugees' right to return.

Conscious that there is still a long and difficult way to go before Israel's apartheid regime is dismantled, but without abandoning our commitment towards the Palestinian struggle, the Initiative was mainly spearheaded by two internationalist organizations: Komite Internazionalistak and Askapena. When it began, the Initiative was centered in the territory of Bizkaia.

As the awareness-raising introduction to the campaign grew, and slogan of boycotting Israel gained popular currency, we felt the increasing need to set targets and work on specific campaigns. As such, we began discussions on what would be the most effective aspects of the campaign to start with. After long meetings and reflections, we decided to focus on two major spheres of campaign work: academic and economic boycott. While we worked on these campaigns, we continued to carry out

Global BDS Movement

different actions of disrupting cultural and sporting events that legitimized the participation of representatives of the Israeli state. We also worked to ensure the presence of our activists and visual and outreach materials in spaces where large masses could be sensitized to the importance of our campaign and the illegitimacy of legitimizing an apartheid state.

Nowadays, the initiative is being welcomed by different movements all over Euskal Herria. There are many regular actions in the streets, as well as awareness-raising lectures. We also make a strong effort to write for the local press, and respond to arguments in the media that hide the crimes committed by Israel. Our slogan, "Israeli Boikot Euskal Ekimena," is plastered everywhere along the streets of our towns and cities. As I said, we remember that the way is long and that there is much work to do, but in Euskal Herria we will not accept to be accomplices in Israel's crimes.

**Patricia Lezama is a member of Komite internazionalistak.*

The Boycott Campaign in Ireland

by David Landy



More on the campaign at:

Irish Palestine Solidarity Campaign
www.ipsc.ie

Trade Union Friends of Palestine
www.tufp.org.uk

Protest calling for boycott of Israeli "blood diamonds." Photo courtesy of Irish PSC.

Using boycotts in popular struggle against oppression has a long history in Ireland. Irish people enthusiastically supported the South African anti-apartheid call for boycott, and boycott is an equally central element of our support for Palestinian resistance. While the Irish government has remained stubbornly deaf to the Palestinian call for boycott, Irish civil society has begun to respond.

The word 'boycott' itself originates in Ireland. Captain Charles Cunningham Boycott (1832 - 1897) was a real person, a brutal English land agent in the late nineteenth century, and one of many who enforced English rule over Irish land. In 1880 the newly-formed Irish Land League advised locals to ostracize him, and the people heeded the Land League's call. No one would harvest the corn on his land, no-one would serve him in shops, no-one would tend to his house or deliver his post.

The campaign forced Captain Boycott to leave Ireland, and in so doing he gave a new word to the language. More importantly he showed the Land League's strength and gave them their first major victory. 130 years later and Irish people still know the power of boycott as a weapon against the powerful, oppressive and unpopular. The Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign is pursuing the boycott of Israel on a number of levels – cultural, academic, consumer boycott and through divestment.

Cultural and Academic Boycotts

There have been a number of BDS movement successes in Ireland. Following protests and campaigns, several Irish cultural institutions including the Irish Film Institute and the Dun Laoghaire Festival of World Cultures have refused to co-operate with the Israeli government or accept their sponsorship.

Importantly Aosdana, the academy of artists sponsored by the Irish state, has responded to the Palestinian call for boycott by overwhelmingly passing a resolution that asked all artists to reflect deeply before considering contacts with Israel. Some artists still accept junkets to Israel paid for by the Israeli state, the latest culprit being the writer Niall Williams. But Irish artists are becoming increasingly aware that such contacts are unacceptable to their fans and the general public, and

Irish Workers and the Struggle for Palestine

- 1980** Trade Union Friends of Palestine (TUFPP) established in Dundee by Yousef Allan and a number of Labor & Trade Union activists. While support for the Palestinian struggle was not generally popular, TUFPP successfully lobbies for a change in the traditional Labor movement approach to the Middle East swinging many unions behind a more pro-Palestinian position. Allan continues to publish *Palestine Post* until his tragic death in January 2001.
- 2005** Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) – the largest mass organization of the Irish working class – commits itself to “campaign in solidarity with the Palestinian people” at its Biennial Delegate Conference.
- June 2007** Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA – the largest trade union in Northern Ireland), unanimously passes all five Palestinian solidarity motions discussed at the 2007 annual delegate conference without a single opposing speaker. One of the motions states that it is “outrageous that the Palestinian people should be forced to recognize as legitimate” an Israeli state that had defied numerous UN resolutions. This detailed resolution went on to claim that the policies of the Israeli government were akin to those of Apartheid South Africa. It therefore called for the same type of response from the trade union movement -- a boycott of Israeli goods. The motion finally called for an investigation of union investments to ensure that they did not contribute to the oppression of the Palestinian people. Another motion instructs the union’s governing body, NIPSA General Council, to support divestment from Israeli companies and a boycott of Israeli goods and services. It instructs General Council to lobby the British and Irish governments to challenge the activities of the Israeli government towards the Palestinian people. It furthermore instructed the General Council to continue to support TUFPP and the ICTU policy of solidarity with Palestine.
- July 2007** ICTU Biennial Delegate Conference passes two motions on Palestine that are extremely critical of the actions of the Israeli government in its oppression of the Palestinian people. The two motions condemn Israel for its human rights abuses, its policy of ethnic cleansing and its war crimes. The motions were proposed by Belfast Trades Council and by Derry Trades Council. Both motions go into considerable detail about the suffering endured by the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation. Conference also criticizes the British and Irish governments and the European Union for the failed policy of “constructive engagement.” Conference characterizes EU policy as one of as “appeasement and in particular criticises the EU for failing to end the preferential trading status granted to Israel under the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement, also calling on the ICTU to send a senior labor delegation to establish solidarity links with labor movement in Palestine.
- November 2007** Senior Irish Labor delegation lead by Patricia McKeown, President of the ICTU, as well as top officials in IMPACT, MANDATE, SIPTU, AMICUS and other labor organizations visit Palestine meeting with Israeli and Palestinian officials, officials in the Histadrut and the PGFTU, as well as rank and file workers in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank. A conclusion of the delegation is that “the privileging of Israeli settlements, and of settler movement in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, taken in conjunction with the repressive measures used against the indigenous Palestinian population, amounts to a form of Apartheid. As such, this policy must be seriously challenged by world opinion and should be opposed in the same way as Apartheid in South Africa was opposed.”
- May Day (May 1) 2008** Three of the main speakers at the Labor Day parade in Belfast call for a mobilization of the Irish working class in solidarity with the oppressed people of Palestine
- May 2008** IMPACT (Irish Public Sector Trade Union) passes two motions criticising Israeli repression of the Palestinian people and calling for a boycott of Israeli goods and services. The motions also call for divestment from those companies engaged in or profiting from the occupation as well as an education campaign to raise awareness of the plight of the Palestinian people. Conference furthermore calls on the Irish Government to take a stand on Palestine independent of EU foreign policy, to demand the restoration of EU funding, and also calling for the suspension of the preferential trading status enjoyed under the Euro-Med Agreement.

“The question for all civilised people however is whether at this very critical moment in our history we either collude with Israeli terror and violence, which - and this is the really worrying thing - is right in front of our eyes, and thus become brutalised ourselves, or else we can take a stand against it and call injustice by its name – to ‘speak truth to power.’”

--Eamon Mc Mahon, Secretary of the Trade Union Friends of Palestine

Visit: *Irish Congress of Trade Unions:* www.ictu.ie
Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance:
www.nipsa.org.uk
IMPACT: www.impact.ie

the role such visits play in legitimizing Israel's apartheid system. For instance, Bono recently turned down an invitation to go to Israel to celebrate the Nakba. Although he cited personal reasons, there can be no doubt that BDS campaign communication about the meaning of his visit had a significant impact on an artist whose image is strongly associated with morality and support for human rights.

Consumer Boycotts and Divestment

Here, we've been raising awareness by asking shops not to stock Israeli fruit and vegetables. We've found out that Irish people don't particularly like Israeli products. A leading Irish wholesaler has told us that he generally doesn't stock

Israeli goods, simply because people don't tend to buy them. Other shops have reported that they have tried to stock fruit and vegetables from elsewhere, but that it is hard for them to find some fresh herbs that *are not* Israeli.



Sign in Belfast calling for EU sanctions against Israel, 2008.
Photo courtesy of Irish PSC.

Our main consumer boycott campaign has focused on Israeli potatoes which flood Irish shops in the late spring. We've been contacting supermarkets and handing out leaflets outside shops. Although only one or two small shops have agreed to stop stocking Israeli goods so far, the issue has resonated with the public and we plan to maintain this campaign. One reason the public has responded positively, in addition to solidarity with Palestine, is the negative effect of selling Israeli potatoes on Irish potato farmers.

BDS activists in Ireland have also been working to expose Israeli diamond exports, a major part of the Israeli economy. In co-operation with solidarity groups worldwide, we have initiated a campaign to raise awareness about the extent of Israeli involvement in the diamond business. We have systematically campaigned for Irish jewelers to provide certifiably Israel-free diamonds, confident that once they do this, people will choose diamonds from countries that respect human rights. The fact that there is growing global awareness about the controversies surrounding diamonds, evidenced by the popularization of the term 'blood-diamond,' is a factor that we hope will help in sensitizing the general public to what they are supporting when they purchase an Israeli-cut diamond.

The main divestment campaign has concentrated on Veolia, the company constructing the illegal tramline in and around Jerusalem. The campaign's research has revealed that this company has many public contracts in Ireland, and we've been contacting Irish politicians, telling them of Veolia's record and of the international campaign against them.

This is only the beginning of the campaign. We know from our own history that the boycott is a slow instrument of change, but we also know that it is a powerful one. As a tool, it comes with its own ratchet effect – success in one area makes success elsewhere easier. And so, in Ireland we are committed to sustaining and intensifying this Palestinian-led boycott campaign.

**David Landy is an Irish-Jewish activist, involved with the Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign. He is currently in the Department of Sociology in TCD, doing his research on English Jewish groups critical of Israel and Zionism.*

Israeli Citizens for a Boycott of Israel

by Roei Harush and Kobi Snitz

More on the Campaign at:

www.boycottisrael.blogli.co.il
www.boycottisraelinIsrael.blogspot.com
www.boycottisraelhebrew.wordpress.com
www.boycottisrael.cafe.themarker.com

Jewish-Israeli activists block streets of Tel Aviv with barbed wire and signs taken from Israel's Separation Wall, 28 December 2006.

Photo courtesy of ActiveStills.org



Over the past few months, a working group has been meeting and discussing how to build the BDS campaign by citizens of Israel. The group itself is composed of a small group of Israeli citizens who object to the daily apartheid policies towards Palestinians everywhere, many of whom are already active in challenging Israeli oppression in different political, intellectual and cultural arenas. Much of the group's work so far has focused on discussing amongst itself, and with the Palestinian initiators of the campaign, on the ways in which this campaign can be built within Israeli society. This article describes some of the results of these discussions.

Haifa, the city in which the campaign is based, is a 'mixed' city. Palestinians and Israeli-Jews reside in it, and there are some advanced political projects in the city that helped in choosing it as the group's center of action. Many of Haifa's Palestinians and some Jews participate in anti-Zionist activity on different occasions, such as Nakba day (May 14-15) and Land day (March 30), and there are regular vigils against Israeli war crimes, as well as various forms of direct action against the occupation and the Zionist regime.

Through the various discussions, it was found that there is broad agreement that support by Israeli citizens, particularly Jewish-Israelis could be very useful to the international BDS campaign. In addition to helping counter the crude characterization of Israel's critics as anti-Semites, the usefulness of organized Jewish-Israeli endorsement for the campaign helps respond to the charge that progressive Israelis, or the Israeli left, do not support BDS. Less clear are the prospects or opportunities for such a movement to exist in a meaningful way.

An important unresolved issue is the legitimate reluctance of many anti-Zionists in Palestine to identify as Israelis. In a movement dedicated to the principle of full equality, the wishes of those who oppose such a label should not be taken lightly. As such, an internal debate has arisen over the simple, but fundamental, question of what to name the group. Does the

usefulness of externally projecting ourselves as Jewish-Israeli settlers in Palestine who oppose the settler colonial project outweigh the principled objection to internally and externally identifying one-self as being part of the Zionist enterprise through the use of the 'Israeli' label? Even on the domestic front, while the Jewish society in Palestine will undoubtedly see BDS demands as extreme, identifying as Israelis may help in getting others to listen to our arguments as members of the same society, rather than further alienating BDS campaigners as a foreign body within that society. This is a long-standing question for the Jewish anti-Zionist movement in Palestine, and while it is an unresolved issue, it should not be allowed to become an obstacle to mounting an effective struggle against the apartheid regime.

The first obstacle to the campaign is the fact that support for BDS is very marginalized within Jewish-Israeli society and some of the prominent advocates of the campaign, such as Ilan Pappé and the late Tanya Reinhart, had to endure a great deal of pressure in response to their position. This official and societal pressure is successful in intimidating many potential supporters of the campaign. Secondly, even amongst potential supporters of BDS the discussion is at a pretty early stage. One indication is that people commonly respond to the proposed campaign with the idea that Israeli citizens (including Palestinian citizens of Israel) can not call for a boycott since they can not avoid participating in the Israeli economy.

In addition to potential usefulness for the global campaign, the main reason for wanting to launch the campaign within Jewish-Israeli society is a principled one that stems from a deep opposition to the colonial Zionist project. While some parts of the Israeli left may have called for selective boycotts, notably of settlement products, there currently exists no agent within this society that operates within the framework of the 9 July 2005 Palestinian civil society call for BDS. Thus, it is felt that it is important to join the Palestinians in their call for boycott, accepting their role as the original initiators, accepting the Palestinian call for boycott as it is, focusing on all three demands of ending occupation, equal rights for Palestinian citizens of Israel, and implementation of the Palestinian refugees' right to return. Participants see BDS as an essential campaign, potentially the most powerful nonviolent campaign possible to stop the ongoing war crimes committed in the name of Jewish people.

The group is now at a stage of planning activities in Israel and abroad. At first, efforts will be focused on educating potential supporters. In the mean time, the group has already been involved in several initiatives. The first action was simply to translate and endorse the Palestinian civil society call for BDS as Israelis. The direct support of Israeli citizens in the BDS call is an important declaration, and one that will hopefully inspire other Israelis to join the campaign. Recently, the group also took part in a march commemorating 41 years of Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. During the march, BDS activists carried signs that read "Boycott Israel" in Hebrew and English, chanting this slogan loudly. After the march, about 30 Israelis held a meeting that lasted about an hour-and-a-half and discussed the idea of boycotting Israel among themselves. The responses were encouraging and it will be important to have such discussions again at other political events. The group also participated in the panel dealing specifically with the boycott campaign at the 21 June 2008 Haifa Conference on the Secular Democratic State. Since then it issued open letters to high profile artists planning to perform in Israel, such as Snoop Doggy Dog and Cypress Hill, calling on them to cancel their visits and to take public positions against the Israeli apartheid regime.

While discussions have produced the preliminary steps already mentioned, there are larger issues that have emerged as requiring more discussion and need to be thought through with the Palestinian initiators of the campaign. For instance, one way in which Hebrew speakers can clearly be of use to the campaign is research into the corporations and institutions supporting and legitimizing Israel's apartheid system. Such research should not be done in an arbitrary fashion, but would be much more useful if done in coordination with the needs of the global campaign and the Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC), the main reference point of the global campaign. Translation of BDS resources and news from other languages to Hebrew will also be an important part of our work, in order to facilitate outreach in the Hebrew-speaking community.

Another question that has come up in discussions is that of how to relate to groups operating within the framework of a



Burning trash bin with anti-occupation poster blocking Tel Aviv street. 28 December 2006. Photo courtesy of ActiveStills.org

selective boycott. Gush Shalom, for example, calls solely for a boycott of settlement products, but not of Zionist-Israeli institutions in general. The practical aspect of how to relate to such groups creates a dilemma: are supporters of BDS based on the Palestinian civil society call to join forces with those who only support part of the call, and after some gains are made on that front, to go on to advocate a wide boycott and further demands; or should they not cooperate with boycott initiatives which do not follow the call issued by Palestinians. The reason for considering the first option is the potential of reaching a much larger audience and increasing the legitimacy of the idea of the boycott campaign within Israeli society. The reason for considering the second option is that given the disproportionate weight that actors within the international community give to Jewish and Israeli voices, Israeli boycott calls might end up setting the agenda for international initiatives. For example, European groups who might want Israeli support for their boycott policies might follow Gush Shalom's policy of only boycotting settlement products while Palestinian organizations have clearly called for support for a wider boycott. By joining forces, even temporarily with those who offer only partial support for the Palestinian call, one may inadvertently give credibility to Israeli decision-making power in what is and should continue to be a Palestinian-led campaign.

A pivotal issue is that of the role and relationship *vis-à-vis* Palestinian citizens of Israel who are central to the campaign. For instance, does the usefulness of having a Jewish-Israeli group calling for boycott, outweigh the potential perpetuation of 'apartness' and 'separation' characteristic of Israeli apartheid by having an exclusively Jewish group? These questions cannot be answered without a longer process of discussion with Palestinian BDS activists on both sides of the green line.

Overall, the feeling in the group is quite positive. Many feel certain that partners in the struggle against the apartheid regime will be found, and that together they can make a strong and effective contribution to the global BDS movement and the Palestinian struggle for freedom.

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Italy and the BDS Campaign

by Mjriam Abu Samra

The Israeli National Bureau of Statistics has published a list of Israel's trade partners during the first 3 months of 2007. In that list, Italy is mentioned as the fourth main exporter to Israel, following the USA, China and Germany. The principal sectors of Italian export are machinery, chemical products and metals.



More on the Campaign at:

Associazione Wael Zuaiter
www.palestinawz.org

Forum Palestina
www.forumpalestina.org

Comitato di Solidarietà con il Popolo Palestinese, Torino
www.palestinalibera.it

Unione Democratica Arabo-Palestinese
www.udap.net

Palestinian-Italian News
www.infopal.it

"Side by Side with the People of Palestine"
Protestors at the 2008 Turin Bookfair.
Photo Courtesy of Mjriam Abu Samra.

"Italy remains a very important economic partner," claims Nir Malah, trade analyst from the ICE (Istituto Nazionale per il Commercio Estero) bureau in Tel Aviv. "Over the last 10 years Italy has always been the third or fourth trade partner of Israel." The official statistics show a steady increase in Italian-Israeli exchange that reached a \$3 billion peak in 2006. Italian exports to Israel, have in fact grown by 6.1% since 2005 and Israeli exports to Italy have risen by 9.2%.

The ICE bureau and the Israeli Foreign Affairs Ministry affirm that the most promising sectors for further development of Italian-Israeli trade cooperation are wood carving machines, metal work machines, biotechnology, and all the strategic sectors characterized by a strong connection between academic research, industrial knowledge and political support by the governments. Moreover, the export of Italian cosmetics continues to grow and, since the UNESCO declared Tel Aviv a World Heritage site in 2004, Italian companies have played the leading role in restoration of heritage sites.

The strong bonds of friendship connecting Italy and Israel become even clearer when taking into consideration the 2005 Military Cooperation Agreement signed by the Italian and Israeli Defense Ministries. This agreement concerns the exchange of armament materials, cooperation in military organization, training and, above all, research and development of the military sector in both countries.¹

This military alliance (in violation of a 2002 European Parliament resolution) shows how strong Italian interests in the Israeli market are, and how unconditional Italian support for Israeli policy has become; in total disregard of the brutal Israeli occupation, discrimination, and denial of return to the people of Palestine. The very strategic geographic position of both Italy and Israel, their interests in the Mediterranean trade area, and the historic guilt-feeling of Italian people for the Jewish tragedy under European Fascism, only serves to further entrench the economic and political relationship between the two countries.

Many Italians who work hard for a better world, for the respect of human rights, justice and peace, are strongly opposed to the Italian-Israeli trade agreements. There are many organizations, movements, associations and committees that demand a policy of divestment and political sanctions against Israel by our government. Unfortunately our politicians turn a deaf ear when they are asked to put principles of justice and international law before economic interests.

In fact, as Italian politics has moved towards the right with the rise of Berlusconi and his junta, official Italian support for Israel has grown. A stark indicator is the inclusion of Fiamma Nirenstein in the Italian parliament under Il Partito della Libertà (“The Party of Liberty”), Berlusconi’s party. Nirenstein, whose parents fought against the Nazis and Fascists of Europe in the Second World War, is a Jewish settler with a house in the Gilo settlement that divides Jerusalem from Bethlehem, and whose political party includes renowned neo-Fascists (who describe themselves as such). In an interview with Ha’aretz, she describes her election platform: “I didn’t talk with the people about local [Italian] problems. I told them that the most important thing for their Italian identity is to stand by Israel’s side.”²

A few years ago, in 2002 during the national demonstration in solidarity with the Palestinian people held in Rome, Neta Golan was a featured speaker, and called for Italian support for the BDS campaign. Since then, Italian groups working for an end to the Israeli occupation in Palestine and many organizations defending human rights have campaigned to raise awareness about BDS as a way to hold Israel accountable for its racist oppression.

Finally the goal of Italian activists is not limited to lobbying the government, but mostly aimed at bringing about a broad-based understanding within Italian society about what is going on in Palestine, and to build a movement that can bring the people of Italy together behind a concerted effort to change the reality in Palestine. Since 2002, and especially since the Unified Palestinian Civil Society Call for BDS in 2005, the main tactic has been to push for a boycott of Israeli apartheid, invoking the success of the South African anti-apartheid campaign and the important role played by similar campaigns at the time.

In Italy, the BDS campaign is focused mostly on Divestment: targeting Italian companies investing in Israel. For the first 3 years of the campaign, most efforts were directed at broadening popular perception of Italians about corporations like GENERALI, TIM, ALENIA, LUXOTTICA, UNICREDITO ITALIANO, TISCALI, FIAT as *de facto* “occupiers” of Palestine through their investments in Israel. The most successful campaign was the one to boycott TELECOM, the national phone company. The company’s Public Relations office received thousands of letters complaining about their involvement in the Israeli economy. In those letters TELECOM was defined as “telefoni rosso sangue,” phones stained with blood. The whole campaign was based on the idea of appealing to people’s moral indignation at being unwittingly complicit in internationally criminal behavior as a result of having big Italian corporations funding a state, Israel, which systematically and daily violates international human rights, humanitarian and criminal law.

In 2005, when the Italian parliament voted in favor of the Italian-Israeli Military Agreement, the BDS campaign in Italy mobilized behind the demand that the law enacting the agreement be revoked. Over the last 3 years, many other Italian cities have witnessed demonstrations organized against the Italian-Israeli Military cooperation agreement, in addition to periodic conferences, seminars, meetings with experts held to raise awareness about the shameful link between the Italian army and the Occupation Army of the apartheid state. The main organizations spearheading this effort, as well as many other campaigns within the Italian BDS movement, are Forum Palestina, Info Pal, UDAP, ISM Italy, Comitato con la Palestina del Cuore, and Associazione Giovani Palestinesi “Wael Zuaier.” Many other groups are also working hard to support the campaign and make it as effective as possible. It is still possible to find letters on websites to send to the Italian parliament to protest against the military agreement with Israel.

2008 has been the most active year for the BDS campaign so far. In January, the organizing committee of the Turin Book Fair announced that the State of Israel was invited to attend the event as the guest of honor. The response from BDS anti-apartheid activists was mass organization and mobilization to challenge the intention of the most important Italian Cultural event to celebrate the creation of the apartheid state without even considering the tragedy that this has meant for the Palestinian people. The boycott of the Book Fairs was the first major experience of national coordination for the BDS campaign in Italy; an *ad hoc* committee was set up under the name “Committee Nakba” and the months preceding the mid-May event saw conferences, debates, lectures, and seminars organized throughout Italy to explain the reasons for demanding a reversal of the decision to invite Israel as guest of honor. It was not a cultural issue; it was not against Jewish religion or society, it was about human rights, respect, and justice.



Protestors at the 2008 Turin Bookfair. Photo Courtesy of Mjriam Abu Samra.

Italian activists asked to boycott the celebration of 60 years since the Nakba, the systematic transfer of Palestine's indigenous population and the partition of Palestine that created the Zionist state. They demanded a boycott of the Fair because it makes Italy an accomplice of Israel's crimes and celebrates an apartheid state in a setting dedicated to culture and therefore to dialogue, plurality and mutual acquaintance, an inclusion that would make a clear statement that Italy considers apartheid and population transfer something normal, worse, something worth celebrating.

The campaign "NO to Israel as guest of honor at the Turin Book Fair" was the first real success of BDS campaign in Italy. As with the campaign demanding revocation of the military agreement, informative postcards were printed and letters were sent to the organizing committee to protest Israel's invitation as guest of honor. For the first time, many prominent intellectuals were mobilized and a clear and strong message was sent and received by the Italian public that normalization with an apartheid state is not acceptable. Despite the accusations of anti-Semitism leveled by right-wing-controlled Italian media and political forces, the day of the National Demonstration in Turin, the Book Fair was empty.

The Italian campaign is therefore highly concentrated on the boycott and call for divestment of Italian companies investing in Israel and maintains a close link with the international BDS campaign. In fact, we translate and make available for the Italian public much of the information on economic ties of large multinationals and Israel. More, just this year the project "Samar Cola" promoted by the Forum Palestina and the Palestinian Red Crescent Society started. The idea has been to produce an alternative to Coca Cola and devote the profits to the Palestinian Red Crescent Society. For now the project has taken off only in Lazio, but hopes to be able to bring Samar Cola to the domestic and hopefully international market. The message that supporters of the BDS campaign want to convey with the production of a Palestinian Cola is that there is always an alternative, and you can choose not to be an accomplice of apartheid.

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Endnotes

See Online Version at: <http://www.badil.org/al-majdal/al-majdal.htm>

Norway 2000-2007: Successes and Failures of a BDS Campaign

by Mali Steiro Tronsmoen

More on the
Campaign at:

Boycott Israel campaign
www.boikottisrael.no

*BDS protest in Norway. Photo
courtesy of Boycott Israel
campaign.*



Since 2001 BDS has significantly shaped the agenda of Palestine solidarity activity in Norway. Some cases along the way have shed significant attention to the plight of the Palestinian people, as well as on ways to end this systematic oppression, ways well worth learning from and building on.

Breaking the Oslo discourse

Public discourse on the conflict over Palestine in Norway has been very strongly related to the notions that were established with the Oslo-process since the 1990s. The Norwegian government had seemingly achieved the unthinkable, bringing what came to be known as “the parties” to the negotiation table and sealing a historic deal for peace.

Thus the 90s came to be characterized by a strong hegemony of dialogue and “partners of peace” discourse, less being noted about the imminent flaws of the Oslo-setup – the lack of binding paragraphs to hold Israel accountable for their escalating violations of Palestinian rights, not least of which was the explosion of settlement expansion, the ongoing military and settler harrassment of Palestinians, and the insidious marginalization of Palestinian refugee rights. This is not to say that there were no critical voices. Respected academics and the core of the solidarity movement were quick to register their warnings, and increasingly raised critical voices to break the heavy curtain of myopic peace lingo and the notion of Norway as the broker of a historic solution.

From earlier times the call to boycott Israel had been a standing parole of the solidarity movement, including groups with clear political positions such as the Palestine Committee. However, in the post-Oslo period, it was not before the eruption of the second Intifada that the call for boycott was raised again in a systematic manner. To the backdrop

of the one-sided war in Palestine, it became all too clear that what was sorely lacking over the past decade had been strong action from ordinary people, organizations and governments to put effective measures in the way of Israeli colonial expansion. The vicious Israeli clampdown of the second Intifada, including but not limited to heavy artillery from both ground and air, and the strangulation of the occupied territories, made activists seek clearer stands and measures of confrontation to expose these crimes.

It was in 2001 that a group of Norwegian activists from different solidarity organizations established a working group that cleared the ground for the launch of a national campaign calling for consumer boycott of Israeli goods.

Consumer Boycott and the Labor Movement

The result was the “Boycott Israel” campaign. A number of solidarity organizations, trade unions, political parties and humanitarian organizations were systematically approached to join in order to boost support for the campaign. Activists argued that “Boycott is a direct means of action when morality, rationality and international law is met with nothing but contempt.” Tens of organizations joined the campaign, and activists started early actions including picketing, putting up posters and organizing actions at local grocery stores. The boycott came to public attention when transportation workers took direct action and blocked the distribution of fruit and vegetables from a distribution centre in Oslo that was a hub of Israeli produce distribution. The major political breakthrough, however, came with Israel’s “Operation Defensive Shield” reinvasion of the West Bank in the spring of 2002. On Labor Day (May 1) of that year, the head of the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO), by far the largest union block and a considerable political actor in Norwegian social democracy, Mrs Gerd Liv Valla, called for the consumer boycott of Israel in her national Labor Day speech. It was a strong message in support of the growing movement for taking direct action against Israel’s occupation, a statement that was all the more significant coming from such an influential Norwegian figure.

The reactions were strong as could be expected. The speech was reported in Israeli media, and Gerd Liv Valla came under heavy attack from Norwegian apologists for Israel’s apartheid regime, as well as mainstream Norwegian politicians and influential characters from abroad. A highlight of the Liv statement aftermath came later that year in a meeting between the LO and the old icon for Norwegian social democrats Shimon Peres that was reported as “the worst meeting ever.”

The LO call for boycott was particularly significant in light of the LOs historical role as part of a Norwegian labor movement, a movement that had been very friendly to the Zionist colonial project, particularly with the Histadrut, for decades. From the early 1980s, however, parts of the Palestine solidarity movement in Norway worked systematically to have the labor movement change towards solidarity with Palestinian workers and the Palestinian struggle. Over the years, a considerable number of Unions had established relations with Palestinian counterparts, and the LO itself with the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU). The LO call for boycott in the spring of 2002 was therefore also a symbol of the historic shift within the movement. Though it caused harsh reaction, to the extent that the LO has been forced to retreat from its clear call for boycott, a number of unions still carry the BDS torch, and the call is still very much alive in the Norwegian labor movement. The Unions may indeed be the most important arena for BDS mobilization in Norway.

Moving Forward with BDS

The consumer boycott has continued to be on the Palestine solidarity agenda since the events of 2002. While activists continued to work to build a consumer boycott, the issue of sanctions was later brought forward by the

Socialist Left party in the Norwegian parliament in the form of bills calling for a total embargo and boycott of Israel especially focused on the arms trade. A standing bill forbidding sales of weapons to countries at war proved inefficient when it was discovered that Norway had continued to sell arms to Israel. The problem of components and arms sold through third countries has also been debated and challenged in parliament, as it was also discovered that Norwegian fuel components were used in American Hellfire Rockets, used by the Israeli military in Gaza.

In spring 2005, the Norwegian Association of NGOs for Palestine (FuP) organized a national conference titled “How to make Israel comply with international law: The call for boycott and sanctions” held in Oslo. In a sense, the conference was the culmination of a growing debate on the role of a wider BDS approach in solidarity work. FuP is the main platform for solidarity in Norway, comprising about 20 NGOs, among them core solidarity groups like the Palestine Committee, left wing parties and youth parties from left to center, as well as trade unions and some humanitarian organizations. The platform endorsed consumer boycott in 2002, and has since adopted various positions in support of BDS. At the time of the conference, clear but scattered messages had been coming from Palestinian civil society calling for BDS, messages that would crystalize later that year in the Unified Palestinian Civil Society Call for BDS until Israel complied with international law, a call which only confirmed that BDS was the way forward. BDS activists emphasized the analysis of Israel’s system of oppression as an apartheid system, similar to that implemented in South Africa. As such, it marked an understanding that BDS had to be on the agenda of solidarity for the time to come, and this message was conveyed to the wider solidarity community.

Regional Boycott – Sør-Trøndelag

The next major landmark bringing BDS further came at a provincial level, when in 2005 a motion for boycott of Israeli goods was put forward in the province council of Sør-Trøndelag, the third largest province in Norway, and the first in Europe to have implemented a boycott against Apartheid South Africa. The motion passed by a majority vote, and from then on, public institutions in the province were compelled to boycott Israeli goods when buying goods and services.

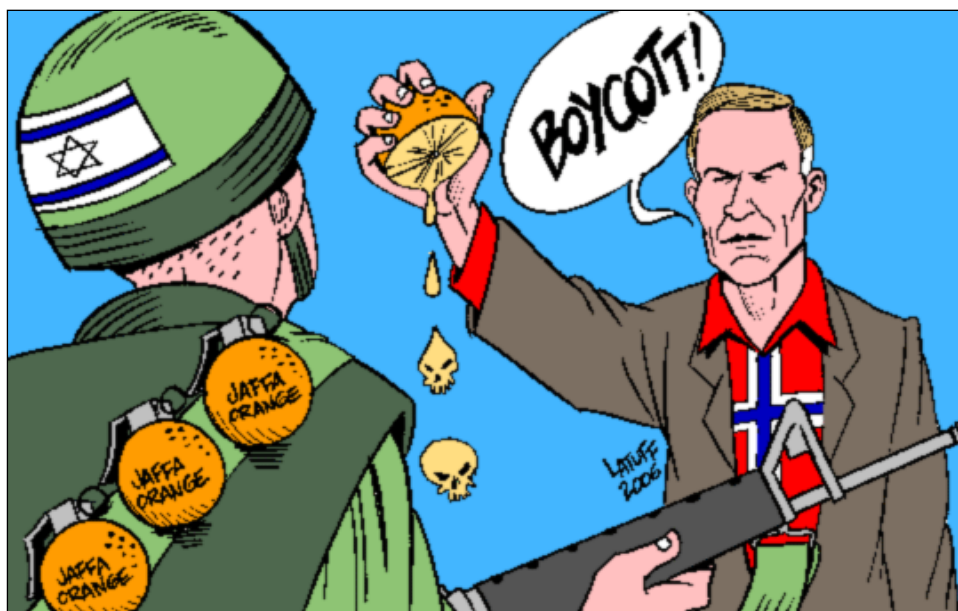
Again the reaction was massive. The governor of the province, a representative of the Labor party, was the target of this round of Zionist pressure, especially since the local labor party branch had voted in favor of the boycott. The solidarity groups launched a global support campaign, with the help of groups in Palestine. Thousands of letters and emails were sent to the governor congratulating him and his legislature on their position and their courage. The Zionist counterattack also involved letters and emails, but also had major influence on the foreign policy establishment in Norway. Zionist pressure on the governor aimed to reverse the democratic decision, and call for a revote. Unfortunately, the pressure succeeded, and the boycott motion was indeed reversed in March 2006, although the Socialist Left Party and the Red Electoral Alliance stood firm and voted against any reversal.

Boycott in the Corridors of Government

Since 2005, numerous BDS initiatives have been carried out. And with the inclusion of the Socialist Left Party into a new center-left government, boycott was again to be debated on a nationwide scale.

The Socialist Left had a long tradition of solidarity behind them, and in the run up to achieving a place in the government in 2005, activists within the party had won support for an apartheid analysis and a call for BDS within the party, adopted on-the-record by the party congress. It was also decided by the party organizations to launch a nationwide campaign for the boycott of Israeli goods just after the party had entered into the new government coalition.

In some chaotic days of January 2006, the issue exploded into the mainstream media. Party leader, and now Minister of Finance,



*The Norwegian Boycott of Israel
by Carlos Latuff*

Kristin Halvorsen, defended the party position and also expressed her personal boycott policy of not buying Israeli goods. The news was broadcast worldwide and the reactions were immense, including an official statement denouncing Halvorsen's statement by the US State Department. This led to intensive "damage control" measures by the foreign policy establishment. The Labor party foreign minister followed the US line in denouncing the finance minister's statements, and immediately wrote a letter both to the Israeli foreign minister and the US secretary of state, the latter starting with the now-famous heading "Dear Condi." In the letters, he not only assured that boycott was not Norwegian policy, but that it would never be, and also that Norway recognized Israel's right to exist within "secure and defensible borders." This wording, departing from the customary language of international law, and bowing to Israel's language notoriously used by Israel for further colonial expansion beyond the 'green line,' was since withdrawn by the foreign ministry as a "mistake." The chaos ended with the Norwegian prime minister demanding that the finance minister publicly withdraw her support for boycott.

Though this may seem to be a setback for the movement, the reality was that for those few weeks, all of a sudden the entire country was debating the boycott of Israel. It became something normal to hear people discussing the matter in barber shops, living rooms, classrooms, and at the dinner table. The Socialist Left party took a severe beating, but persevered, and went through with their boycott campaign nonetheless. Government policy definitely was lost, but BDS was also put up for the public to take a stand and others to join. An opinion poll suggested that one-in-five Norwegians fully supported the call for boycott, a significant encouragement indeed!

Current Issues

Since the two above cases, the BDS issue has entered a new phase in Norway. The issue is widely known, but there are still massive obstacles and challenges to overcome before BDS becomes public policy, as evidenced by the effectiveness of the Zionist reaction described above. Still there are several local consumer boycotts that are ongoing. More recently, specific issues have been raised relating to divestment, particularly as it pertains to the Norwegian Government's pension fund, as well as for confronting Veolia which is rapidly expanding its presence in Norway, for their involvement in the Jerusalem light rail.

The Norwegian Government Pension fund, one of the largest investment funds globally, has invested in bonds and stocks

Global BDS Movement

BDS activists distribute leaflets and collect hand-stamps on a banner calling for boycott of Israel. Photo courtesy of Boycott Israel Campaign.



in Israel since 2005. The bonds invested in the Israel Electric Corporation (IEC) have drawn special attention for IECs involvement in the building of illegal infrastructure in occupied territories, and recently for their involvement in cutting off the electricity supply to the besieged Gaza strip starting in winter 2008. A number of individuals and organizations have called for divestment, and Norwegian People's Aid have brought it to the attention of the ethical advisory council of the Pension Fund, which has yet to announce its decision. Larger sums have also been invested directly in Israeli state bonds. Similar calls for divestment have been launched, and this is a major task for the BDS movement in the time to come. These public investments in Israeli apartheid will be the real test for the Norwegian BDS struggle in the near future.

Conclusions

This summary of BDS initiatives, successes and failures so far has of course not been able to cover more than few parts of the vast number of actors and initiatives. However to build a strong BDS-movement in Norway that could really push for change in policies, emphasis should be placed on finding efficient platforms of national coordination. Solidarity movements are all too often fragmented and the main victim of this disunity is the effectiveness of Norwegian solidarity. With considerable support such as that of Trade Unions however, and with the issue put up on the table for the public debate through the events of recent years, the dedicated actors working for BDS in Norway stand on solid ground. Although we have not yet won the battle for public policy adoption of BDS, the success of BDS lies in the change it brings to the debate on how to grapple with Israel's apartheid regime.

**Mali Steiro Tronsoen is leader of the Socialist Youth Party. She is a BDS activist in support of Palestine and former leader of The Norwegian Association of NGOs for Palestine. She can be reached at malitron@gmail.com*

Lessons from the BDS Campaign in Scotland

by Mick Napier & Sofiah MacLeod

This article outlines some of the lessons learned so far in BDS campaigning in Scotland. We face some real challenges, as well as significant opportunities as we work to take the BDS campaign forward. We should be clear that the BDS campaign can only rely on those who are willing to answer the appeal from Palestinian civil society for us to use this non-violent,



democratic weapon to punish Israel for its crimes. BDS is unlikely to win support from currents and individuals who aim to 'balance' between Israeli crimes and Palestinian rights, who refuse to align themselves clearly with the struggle of the Palestinian people, and only sympathize with their suffering.

The key role for any movement which claims to be in solidarity with Palestine in the current period is to channel the widespread anger at Israel's brutal methods of ethnic cleansing into an effective BDS campaign. The aims of the BDS campaign are not unrealistic, i.e. they are realizable: to send a clear message to Palestinians that the bulk of global civil society supports the Palestinians and is hostile to Zionism, despite the clear positions of Western governments to the contrary. We also send a clear message to Israelis that if they persist in policies and practices of murder, torture, and dispossession, they will pay an increasing price from international civil society.

Crucially, the call for BDS comes from Palestinians. Solidarity takes many forms, from twinning to cultural visits and exchanges, but the call for BDS is the unique appeal from the entirety of Palestinian civil society for action worldwide by their supporters. This appeal needs to be widely publicized. BDS is the strategy for aligning pro-Palestinian sympathizers in an effective auxiliary role in the Palestinian struggle for liberation.

The Israeli military and settlers have killed thousands of Palestinians during this Intifada and sometimes it must seem to observers that Israel is unbeatable. Politically, however, in the arena of world public opinion, Israel has already been decisively defeated by the struggle of the Palestinians. The iconic images of Mohammad Al-Dura, Faris Odeh, Israeli bulldozers and war machines, and Palestinians defending their homes with nothing but stones and their own bodies have seeped into public awareness around the world, causing popular support for Israel to evaporate. Past sympathy for Israel has been replaced by deep suspicion and ever-growing hostility to the Zionist project.

Zionist publications regularly discuss what they see as a crisis caused by rising hostility to Israel. Indicative of Israeli awareness of this new reality is the response of Israeli company Eden Springs to boycott campaigns in Scotland and elsewhere. Eden Springs does not even try to defend Israel, but strives to conceal their true status as an Israeli company, as does, for example, the Israeli-owned Caledonian Hotel in Edinburgh. Indeed, a boycott picket outside this hotel in Edinburgh's city center swiftly elicited a letter from hotel lawyers denying its widely-reported Israeli ownership and arguing, correctly, that disseminating this fact was 'incredibly damaging to the Hotel's reputation and its business.'

More on the Campaign at:

Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign

www.scottishpsc.org.uk

Protesters carry "Boycott Israel" placards as they protest a JNF fundraiser in Glasgow on 9 March 2008.

Photo courtesy of Scottish PSC.

The Palestinian Intifada itself, therefore, with its unambiguous images of struggle against military occupation, has massively eroded world-wide support for Zionism and Israel. When Archbishop Desmond Tutu describes Israeli actions as ‘an abomination,’ ex-US President Carter writes about Israeli apartheid, and the UN Special Rapporteur, Jewish-American Richard Falk, sticks by his comparison of Israeli policies to those of Nazi Germany, they are articulating widely held attitudes.

This is the background to the developing consumer boycott of Israeli goods. The evidence is only anecdotal, but it certainly seems that increasing numbers of people who are not reached by active campaigns refuse to purchase any Israeli goods. An inherent weakness of this component of the BDS campaign, however, is that success or failure, advances or retreats of a consumer boycott are impossible to measure. We simply cannot know the degree of pressure that British retailers of Israeli herbs, chocolate or flowers are feeling as a result of a myriad of private consumer choices against Israel. Neither can private decisions and actions, however numerous, send any strong message to Palestinians in their prisons and to Israelis in their Merkavas. It should also be clear that the spread of a culture of boycott, where individuals choose not to buy Israeli products, can only gain political significance when it comes together in concerted, systematic and public campaigns, leaving no room for doubt that the reason Israeli products are not profitable is precisely because the profits are destined for the coffers of an unacceptable racist regime and its economy.

Collective BDS initiatives have already succeeded in sending clear messages to Israel/Palestine. At a UK trade union level, the decisions of the UCU lecturers’ union to organize a national discussion of an academic boycott of Israeli universities both infuriated Zionist apologists, and gave renewed strength to Palestinian civil society. At a more local level, BDS activists forced the Edinburgh International Film Festival to return money it had accepted from the Israeli Embassy in London. Faced with threats of pickets and protests at every film showing of the 2006 International Festival, the organizers reluctantly returned the Israeli money and with it a strong political message to film-makers and others in Israel, Palestine and across the Arab world: Israel is not welcome at such cultural events so long as it is committing the crime of apartheid.

Israeli sporting visits should also be an important focus for successful boycott organizing. The attempted participation of the Israeli cricket team in an international tournament in Scotland in 2006 led to a straight win, Palestine 1- Israel 0, when persistent protests during the early matches forced organizers to cancel the arrangements which had been put in place for Israel to play in Glasgow, the host city. The Israeli team’s games had to be rescheduled behind barbed wire at an isolated British military base far from population centers, at Lossiemouth in the Scottish Highlands. The matches were played, but Israel’s pariah status was reinforced. Each such victory, however small, helps to establish no-go areas for Israeli sporting ambassadors.

A campaign to boycott the Israeli water cooler company Eden Springs is beginning to achieve some success as one Scottish university, a college and a number of other customers (such as the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organizations and UNISON Scotland) have canceled their contract with this company, while union branches and student associations across Scotland are committing to a boycott of Eden Springs water. Eden Springs is particularly vulnerable since they operate across universities, colleges, schools, hospitals; in each of these places groups of pro-Palestine sympathizers and activists work or study and are willing to take action on their home turf in support of Palestine and against Israel.

The KKL-JNF is another Israeli Achilles’ heel, albeit one that has fended off all attacks to date. The racist JNF



Scottish protesters opposing a JNF fundraiser in Glasgow on 9 March 2008. Photo courtesy of Scottish PSC.

enjoys charitable status in the UK to raise funds for its Israeli counterpart to carry out activities in both Israel and the Occupied Territories that would be illegal if attempted here in Britain, i.e. buying land or financing construction on seized land which only Jews can lease or benefit from, and financing water theft and apartheid in the West Bank. It would be an outrage today if Jews in Europe were banned from living outside ghettos; the bare facts of Israeli apartheid land laws, and the involvement of a British charity in intensifying the ghettoization of the Palestinians is a scandal which is kept from public view by the convention that all the leaders of all the major political parties become Honorary Patrons of this outfit. Their Hilton Scottish fund-raisers, however, are always vigorously protested by hundreds. When Mofaz spoke for the JNF in October 2002, the catering staff refused to go through the mass of protest pickets outside and assorted bigwigs inside had the rare experience of self-catering. In March 2004, the entertainer Ruby Wax, the star guest for the JNF bash, was met by a militant, hundreds-strong protest and shortly after announced her withdrawal from the London celebrations of Israeli Independence Day, citing Israel's assassination of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin as the main reason. The important thing is to vigorously contest each and every such fundraising event with grass-roots mobilization; we are the sure-fire winners against Israel at the level of popular opinion.

There is no pressing need for BDS activists to go to Palestine; Israel has already come to us. The initial problem is not to convince the majority of people of the case for Palestine; rather it is to move those already sympathetic towards action. This is not to discourage from awareness

The Proxy Badge of Victimhood

by Tom Leonard

when the colonial oppressor
wears the proxy badge of victimhood

when the state talks about democracy
and boasts about democracy
and busses in its voters
from the 4 corners of the globe

when the possession of nationality
is a foot landing on an airport tarmac
and the dispossessed fester
in the camps of the dispossessed

when spokespersons for the state
are good at explaining the current position in
English
because they are English
and good at sounding American
because they are American

and the natives are hopeless spokespersons
who speak in heavily accented English
because they are not English
who don't sound American
because they are not American

they are foreigners
on their native soil
and they sound like foreigners
because that's all they are
to the English, and to the Americans
and to the incoming dispossessors
foreigners

statehood is right to arms
statehood is control of the air

and the state walls up the natives
the state drives roads through their livelihood
the state uproots their livelihood

statehood is tank
statehood is bulldozer of homes

state killing is not killing
state killing is justifiable context
state killing is the operation of justice

stateless killing is simply killing
stateless killing is never context
stateless killing is motiveless evil

we are the state
you are the stateless
the battle is good versus evil
what more history do you need?

to accuse the state of oppression
is genocide

to accuse the state of racism
is genocide

to accuse the state of colonial expansion
is genocide
no one wants to be accused of genocide
much better to turn a blind eye

but the state is oppressive
but the state is racist
but the state is intent on colonial expansion

and the state colonises the past
the state says its people are the single victims
of history

yet many are the victims of history
no single people has precedence

we inherit no victimhood from the murdered in
the genocides of history
we inherit no guilt from the murderers in the
genocides of history

they are the dead
we are the living

who alone are responsible for our actions
who cannot forever blame our role as victims

to be oppressive
to be racist
to be intent on colonial expansion

wearing the proxy badge of victimhood

Visit <http://www.tomleonard.co.uk>

Listen to the poet reciting this poem at <http://www.scottishpsc.org.uk>

raising activities, but to clarify that small groups of committed people can have a large impact if their work is properly planned and implemented. Since the movement is based on just principles and truth, people will become increasingly conscious and join the movement if we can offer a clear path of how to effectively channel our solidarity efforts. No matter what other activity we may get involved in, the task is for all of us to deliver effective solidarity, and for the moment BDS is the tool we must use. These kinds of boycott activities bring groups, large and small, together to campaign. The level of success of these initiatives is measurable, tactics that succeed can be generalized and there is a learning curve for all those involved. The Palestinian appeal for BDS however is not given the priority it deserves within the wider pro-Palestinian milieu in Scotland, Britain and around the world. This is partly the result of a misplaced desire to be 'balanced' between ethnic cleansing Israel and its Palestinian victims but it is often simply a result of seeing BDS as one item in a long agenda of pro-Palestinian advocacy and campaigning, rather than as a central duty of all human rights activists. Currently BDS is the most effective mechanism for going well beyond the existing confines of pro-Palestinian activism to mobilize part of that vast constituency of trade unionists, students and others who are broadly very sympathetic to Palestine and hostile to apartheid. A significant problem is that sections of the left oppose BDS as the strategic core of Palestine solidarity campaigning posing false alternatives of twinning and even wider anti-war activity to BDS work.

On the labor movement front, the claim by the Histadrut that the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) seeks co-operation and is opposed to BDS prevents the breaking of relations by UK and other trade unions. Consequently, trade union leaders who do not wish to break fundamentally with the criminal policies of the British government fend off calls for BDS by parading joint PGFTU-Histadrut delegations. It should be stressed that much of this widely-publicized Histadrut-PGFTU relationship is mythology, a fact discovered first-hand by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions delegation to Palestine in 2007 which learned of the massive amounts of money coercively taken by the Histadrut from Palestinian workers which the PGFTU has consistently demanded be returned over the past 14 years. Either way, activists should not be deterred from pushing forward on BDS. The PGFTU, and importantly, PGFTU local branches as well as other Palestinian trade unions, largely overlooked even by activists, have made their appeal for BDS, and specifically for cutting ties with the Histadrut. In fact, the PGFTU is a member organization of the Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC). It is crucial to remember that BDS is a grassroots appeal from Palestinian civil society, and even if Zionist pressure results in a Palestinian figure distancing themselves or their organizations from the campaign, this should not confuse anyone as to the legitimacy and mass support in Palestine for the campaign.

It is useful for delegations to visit Palestine to witness for themselves the full horror of Israeli occupation. It is, however, more important to support the Palestinian appeal for boycott of Israel in our own universities and trade unions. Here, we are strong and Israel is exceedingly weak. Campaigning for institutional commitment to boycott can deepen Israel's isolation, win active support for Palestinian human and national rights and deliver psychological and even economic blows against the apartheid state.

Sofiah MacLeod (Secretary of the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign):

"At the end of August 2001 I attended my first Scottish PSC meeting. Two weeks later the twin towers in New York were hit. Since then I have been active in Scottish PSC. We challenge the roots of Zionism here in Scotland, mainly by campaigning for BDS and for Palestine as a core issue in the wider anti-war movement."

Mick Napier (Chair of the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign):

"I became politically active on the left at 18 and spent four years at university, like many others, opposing the US devastation of Vietnam. I visited Palestine during the first Intifada and founded the Scottish PSC at the start of the second to mobilize grass-roots opinion against British complicity, now in its 90th year, in the violation of the people of Palestine."

South Africa's Second Anti-Apartheid Movement

by *Natasha Vally*

At the 2001 World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) in Durban, South Africa, over 10,000 people declared the launch of a “second anti-apartheid movement.” The participants at the conference acknowledged that “The suffering in the West Bank and Gaza is the continuation of the colonization of all of Palestine.” Four years later, in 2005, over 170 Palestinian civil society organizations called for a worldwide boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign similar to the one launched against the South African Apartheid state. It was a call on the world to join those in South Africa and the millions in Palestine in the “second anti-apartheid movement.”

Throughout the Apartheid years in South Africa there were individuals and groups who identified and stood in

solidarity with the Palestinian people and their struggle for freedom. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) became a symbol of resistance for most South Africans. South Africans struggling against apartheid policies and realities agreed with Hendrik Verwoerd (considered the architect of South African apartheid) when he stated that “Israel like South Africa is an apartheid state.” Unlike Verwoerd, they considered this a violent abuse of human rights and not a reason to praise Israel. In 1976, a watershed in the resistance against Apartheid where, according to some estimates, 800 mostly young people were killed when the Apartheid regime sought to repress the June 16th Soweto Uprising, the Apartheid prime minister John Vorster was invited to Israel and received with open arms by the likes of Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Perez.

In addition to identifying with the struggle of Palestinians, South Africans also recognized that Israel was playing a role in their own oppression. For instance, Israel was an important arms supplier to Apartheid South Africa despite the international arms embargo, and by 1980, 35% of Israel's arms exports were destined for South Africa. Israel was loyal to the racist state and clung onto the friendship when almost all other relationships had dissolved. During the 1970s this affiliation extended into the field of nuclear weaponry when Israeli experts helped South Africa to develop at least six nuclear warheads; and in the 1980s, when the global anti-apartheid movement had forced their states to impose sanctions on the Apartheid regime, Israel imported South African goods and re-exported them to the world as a form of inter-racist solidarity.

The nature of the South African apartheid regime made it difficult to organize and speak out against worldwide oppression. This was clear in 1982 after the Sabra and Shatila massacres when South African students protesting the massacre were arrested at even supposedly “white liberal” universities. State and university apparatuses as well as Zionist lobby groups



More on the Campaign at:

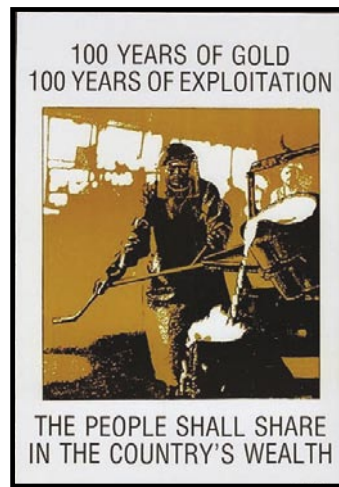
Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation

www.endtheoccupation.org.za

Palestine Solidarity Committee

www.psc.za.org

*Palestine solidarity poster.
Courtesy of PSC-South Africa*



Posters from the South African anti-Apartheid Campaign

such as the South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS) were involved in the repression of these demonstrations. As a student organizing on a South African university campus today it is evident that the identical bodies (despite regime change and the passing of time) are responsible for suffocating legitimate protests and campaigns.

Whilst the Palestine Solidarity Committee of South Africa (PSC) was formed before 2001, this was the year when Palestine solidarity work in South Africa transformed at many levels. The reasons for this transformation are nuanced but include the formation of the PSC itself, a secular organization started by respected South African anti-Apartheid activists involved in the liberation movements and contemporary social movements. A further factor was the WCAR and specifically the United States' refusal to equate Zionism with racism or to put Palestine on the conference agenda. Furthermore, South Africa became a greater focus for secular Palestinian organizations and a few anti-Zionist South African Jews began to speak out against Israel.

Whilst the Palestine Solidarity Committee of South Africa

Solidarity began to be viewed on the basis of human rights and national liberation rather than as a "Muslim" issue. Those working on other social justice and civil rights issues began to discuss Palestine within their contexts. Na'eem Jeenah, spokesperson for the PSC, says of the WCAR and the changing face of South African solidarity with Palestine that

While Palestinians learnt to toyi-toyi and saw reflections of their own refugee camps in the townships around Durban, South Africans discovered just how similar apartheid South Africa and Zionist Israel really were. The fact that many of the Palestinian groups in Durban were secular NGOs or political groups broke down the image for many South Africans of Palestine as simply a Muslim issue. And when Palestinians participated in the Landless Peoples' Assembly, joined the protests of the Dalits and cheered with South Africans for Cuba's Fidel Castro, the need for increased Palestinian solidarity work in South Africa became clearer to South African activists.

The role played by non-governmental organizations in the Arab world that linked with Palestinian groups in the 1948 areas and the Diaspora as well as those in the West Bank, Gaza and Golan played a pivotal role in the success of the Durban WCAR conference. These organizations spent months in preparatory work and liaised with South African civil society.

Although the bombings of the Twin Towers in New York had the effect of overshadowing the significant gains made at Durban, the years 2001-2002 saw a proliferation of Palestine solidarity groups in almost every major South African city and many towns. When the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) came to Johannesburg in 2002, these solidarity organizations and social movements were prepared. Taking advantage of the presence of a number of Palestinian groups, the PSC held a rally at the Johannesburg City Hall of thousands of people. Prominent speakers included representatives from Stop the Wall, Badil, Ittijah, PARC and other Palestinian and international civil society organizations.

These representatives were also involved in the 10,000 people march in Johannesburg during the WSSD organized by the PSC and various social movements. Reflecting tensions among South African organizations, the ANC alliance organized

a separate and much smaller march. These tensions came to a head when Shimon Perez spoke in Johannesburg. The PSC-organized demonstration against Perez was brutally suppressed by a heavily armed contingent of the notorious and largely unreformed branch of the South African police. A leading member of the PSC was singled out by plain clothes men, whose clear purpose was to protect Perez, and handed over to the police. He was subsequently detained overnight.

The South African government, while paying lip-service to the injustices against the Palestinian people due to the historic connection between the two struggles, sees investment by high-tech industries from Israel as a priority because of the neo-liberal capitalist path they have chosen. In this sense, profits are put before solidarity. Trade with Israel, particularly around minerals, metal and coal continues; South Africa is Israel's principal trading partner in Africa. Trade between the two countries was worth about R4 billion in 2003, up from R3.8 billion in 1999. The diamond trade alone was worth R4.4 billion between 1999 and 2003. Salim Vally, a spokesperson of the PSC, says of a facet of the Israel-South Africa relationship that

people around the world have taken their inspiration from our struggle against Apartheid. People see the links between Apartheid South Africa and apartheid Israel. It's a way of really undercutting that link and undermining it and it's a huge propagandistic coup for Israel if they can get it right.

Despite the parallels that resonate between apartheid South Africa and Israel, there are still Israeli investments and supporters in South Africa. Ehud Olmert visited South Africa in October 2004 and met with the Minister of Trade and Industry, Mandisi Mpahlwa who called the encounter "an extraordinary success." While this extraordinary success was underway, Palestine Solidarity Committee protesters accompanied by members of various groups such as the Anti-Privatization Forum (APF), one of the largest social movements in South Africa today demonstrated in opposition to the meeting. Protesters were manhandled by police and put into "hippos," vehicles that used to trawl the townships during Apartheid, and thrown into jail.

More recently, with the undeniable and growing track record of Israeli investment and involvement in South Africa, a contract has been awarded to an Israeli company to work with Transnet Freight Rail, an international rail operator in South Africa. The project will involve the railway connection of three major South African cities (spanning 34 000 kilometers) including the installation of surveillance cameras, digital video recorders, access control systems, fire systems, and electrical fence sensors. This action has been strongly condemned by the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) who sent out a press release confirming the "need to send a clear message to all oppressors that our country will not be used by countries which oppress peoples for greedy commercial interests."



"Apartheid: South Africa's History, Palestine's Reality" - Thousands in Cape Town, South Africa, call for sanctions against Israel, lifting the siege on Gaza, the release of political prisoners and victory against Israeli aggression on Lebanon, Summer 2006. Photo courtesy of PSC South Africa.

The PSC mirrored this sentiment and Salim Vally went on to say that

...we don't think they [Israeli business and government investment] will succeed. We think our government have miscalculated; they don't understand the level of support Palestinian people have in our country. And when civil society and social movements understand this, they will see it as a betrayal and it will come to haunt this government, which continues rhetorically to say they support the national aspirations of the Palestinian people.

Fortuitously, Leila Khaled, a hero to many South Africans who identified with the legitimate right to resist, was in South Africa during the 2006 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. During this period, differences amongst ANC-aligned organizations were apparent. At a press conference the PSC, COSATU and the South African Council of Churches for the first time called for the BDS campaign. Voicing her support for BDS, Leila Khaled was featured on major television and radio programs and in a wide range of South African newspapers. She spoke across the country in communities that were themselves living under the heavy legacy of apartheid. The same support from social movement groups that was highlighted in 2001 at the WCAR was echoed during the visit.

COSATU, who organize 1.8 million South African workers under their banner, came out strongly with resolutions against apartheid Israel. Workers organized in COSATU drew comparisons between the two apartheid regimes. Their resolutions included expressing outrage at the continuing Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands in blatant violation of international law and human morality and condemning in the strongest possible terms the violence perpetrated by the Israeli occupation forces which includes extra-judicial killings, the wanton destruction of infrastructure, government installations and Palestinian homes.

The former president of COSATU, Willie Madisha, wrote in his letter of support to CUPE Ontario (Canadian Union of Public Employees) after the passing of their resolution to launch a BDS campaign against Israel (Resolution 50) that

I say with confidence that Israel is an apartheid state... When the governments of the world turn a blind eye to these injustices... then it is time for the global workers' union to stand firm against hypocrisy and double standards.

The passing of resolutions and general education around Palestine is undeniably important. The significant role of these measures is multi-faceted and includes popular education as well as a global solidarity and awareness campaign. However, it is critical that resolutions are substantiated by action. BDS is a tool of resistance that has been proposed by those sectors of Palestinian society that have the most resonance with workers, students, and activists worldwide. We do risk the passing of hundreds of resolutions without any practical strategies.

Virginia Tilley, a professor of political science currently working in South Africa says of boycott

Good cause [for boycott] has, of course, been in place for decades, as a raft of initiatives already attests. But Israel's war crimes are now so shocking, its extremism so clear, the suffering so great, the UN so helpless and the international community's need to contain Israel's behavior so urgent and compelling, that the time for global action has matured.

In South Africa, mass struggle resulted in the end of legislated apartheid, but the global solidarity movement was the essential support that South Africa needed and requested from abroad in order to isolate the regime and ensure that it and its institutions were not welcome anywhere. BDS was a long and often turbulent global act of resistance and needed to constantly be revised and reenergized. This global resistance campaign was and is most effective when groups around the world know they are supported and can support one another. During the anti-Apartheid movement in South Africa, "Amandla! Awethu!" (Power to us, the people) was called in unison. Today, around the world, BDS activists chant "Amandla! Intifada!" (Power to the Intifada)- in their call to heed the request of Palestinians and be at their side.

**Natasha Vally graduated with an Honors degree from the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg South Africa last year. She is a member of the campus' Palestine Solidarity Committee (The Wits PSC) and the national Palestine Solidarity Committee.*

The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Campaign in Spain

by Boicot Preventiu



More on the Campaign at:

Committee of Solidarity with the Arab Cause (Identification and boycott of Israeli products campaign)

www.nodo50.org/csca

Solidarity Network against the Palestinian Occupation (Coordination network of Palestine solidarity organizations)

www.nodo50.org/causapalestina

Demonstration against NATO in Seville linking the struggle against Israeli apartheid with the global anti-war movement. 4 February 2007.

The Commercial Relationship between Spain and Israel

Spain and Israel established diplomatic relations in 1986. From then on, the volume of bilateral economic and commercial activity between the two countries has continued to increase. Spain has become the tenth largest commercial partner of Israel, and Israel is Spain's principal market in the Middle East. According to the Israeli ambassador to Spain, the bilateral commercial interchange increased to \$1.241 million in 2005. Israel has exported \$564 million worth of goods to Spain, and Israeli imports from Spain reached \$677 million.

Israeli exports to Spain are principally chemical industry products (34% of the total value of the exports), machines, especially for agriculture and irrigation (29%), plastic and rubber products (13%), plants and vegetables (6%) and, to a lesser extent, products related to the telecommunications industry, software and medical equipment. The use of Israeli technology in irrigation and water desalination (especially on the Mediterranean coast) is particularly noticeable. The Spanish exports to Israel consist of transport equipment (37%), chemical products (14%), machines (10%), plastic and rubber (8%), mineral products (8%) and basic metals (5%).

On the other hand, Spain has signed various agreements and bilateral conventions with Israel. The Cooperation Agreement for Investigation and Industrial Development (1993), agreements in the areas of agriculture and energy, and the convention to avoid a double imposition are of particular importance. The governments of autonomous communities have also signed agreements with Israel.

The BDS Campaign in Spain

The BDS campaign is driven by various associations which form part of the Solidarity Network against the Israeli

occupation, mainly NGOs, solidarity groups, some minority political parties as well as some labor union locals. The campaign consists of four main areas of action: the commercial agreements between the European Union and Israel, the arms traffic between Spain and Israel, the cultural and consumer boycott of Israeli products. In the first two, we address governmental institutions and in the other two, the society at large.

Break the commercial agreements between the European Union and Israel!

In 1995 the European Union and Israel signed the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement which eliminated the customs barriers and the quantity restrictions on imports and exports between the EU and Israel. The agreement, which came into effect in June 2000, establishes the basis of the relationship as “the respect of democratic principles and Human Rights (preamble and article 2) and includes a rule of origin (article 83) which excludes from the agreement all products coming from the occupied territories, i.e. the Israeli colonial settlements in the West Bank and, at the time, Gaza. As Israel illegally exports products manufactured in the colonies, the European Commission published a “Notice to importers” in the Official Bulletin of November 2001 in which it declared that the import of these products could lead to a “custom debt” and recommended the European importers and the customs authorities of the member states take precautionary measures in the form of a guarantee deposit. The European Parliament adopted a resolution in which it requested the Council and the European Commission to suspend the Agreement (10 April 2002). This resolution itself has not been implemented, despite the fact that the European Parliament is supposed to represent the democratic will of the peoples of the continent.

A central demand of the Spanish BDS campaign, as well as most other BDS campaigns in Europe, is that the Euro Mediterranean Accord be suspended. This demand has been manifested in the distribution of leaflets and the collection of signatures on petitions under the framework of the European Coordinating Committee of NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ECCP). In January 2007, 18,750 signatures were handed over to the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs. The public impact of this initiative has been minimal and the response of the government, a reverberating silence.

Arms Traffic

Spanish companies sell arms to Israel. As of 1991, these added up to a value of at least 1,000 million Euros. This commerce constitutes a clear violation of the European Union’s Code of Conduct for Arms Export which urges the member states not to export arms to countries where there are situations of conflict or tension, where human rights are violated or where international humanitarian law is not respected. All three conditions apply to Israel, although only

one is enough to make such arms sales a violation of the Code.

On the other hand, the Spanish government also buys Israeli arms, some with the sinister guarantee that they have been tested in real-life situations, such as the failed but brutal Israeli reinvasion of Lebanon in the summer of 2006.

The Spanish companies responsible for the sale of arms to Israel are not susceptible to being boycotted by ordinary consumers and, as can be deduced from the criminal nature of such commerce, they are not receptive to ethical arguments. For this reason, the campaign has been limited to raising awareness about the case, and handing out leaflets of information and calling for citizen complaints.

On the other hand, the academic institutions focused on the investigation for peace (UNESCO professors) and reputable



Boycott campaign poster calling for an end to EU-Israel trade.

NGOs (Amnesty International, Intermon Oxfam, Greenpeace) have repeatedly requested that the Spanish government impose an arms embargo on Israel. The European Parliament also demanded that the European Commission implement an embargo (10 April 2002). None of these appeals and resolutions have resulted in government action.

The Cultural Boycott

This area, which also includes the sports and academic boycotts, we consider very important, due to the large media impact it can have. Since it concerns people and institutions with public notoriety, the cultural boycott contributes to generating a social debate about the legality of maintaining relations with Israel.

With this in mind, we carried out visibly disruptive activities in the FC Barcelona pavilion when the Israeli basketball team Maccabi Tel Aviv was playing. The social impact was remarkable and the indications of wide public support were very positive. However, police repression was disproportionate: fines of 3,000 euros for carrying a Palestinian flag! All considered, these experiences confirm that this is a line of action with great potential.

In addition, a letter was sent to the President of Spain requesting that the Minister of Foreign Affairs not attend the 60th anniversary of Israel celebrations. Another letter was sent to a distinguished Catalan writer requesting that he not participate in the International Writers' Festival in occupied Jerusalem; and another, to the director of the Saragossa Expo 2008 requesting him to withdraw his invitation to the Israel Symphony Orchestra. None of these three cases had successful outcomes, although there was great value in publicizing the letters.

In the strictly academic area, the campaign has not taken off. It is worth noting, however, that the relationship with Israel in this area is not as deep as in other countries.

729: Consumer Boycott of Israeli Products

With the appeal for consumer boycotts of Israeli products, we have addressed Spanish society on two different levels: requesting individual consumers and institutions not to buy products produced in Israel, and requesting that companies not sell them. We have quite a thorough list of the Israeli products sold in Spain and the establishments where they can be found. They are, above all, agricultural produce, wine, cosmetics, games, technology for agriculture and technological patents. In addition, there is Eden Springs water. The truth is that it is been difficult to find Israeli products appropriate for commercial boycott: identified, easily substituted and of popular consumption.

We produced leaflets, with arguments and lists of products, which were widely distributed. We have also sent letters to establishments which sell these products, we had meetings with them and we carried out protests at their entrances. In some cases, we have established an interesting dialogue with the companies, even though we have not yet obtained boycott commitments from any of the major corporations. Some individual consumers and socially conscious companies have adhered to the boycott, but the objective is to get a big company to publicly announce a boycott of Israel to encourage others to follow suit. Finally, various organizations have sent letters to Spain's official distributor of Caterpillar, with a predictable silence as the response.



BDS activist waving a Palestinian flag storms the court during a Barcelona-Tel Aviv basketball match, 3 April 2008.



Boycott poster highlighting the "729" barcode of many Israeli exports.

Conclusions

Palestine solidarity organizations have started to spread the word about the BDS campaign, and it has been received favourably in many circles despite the fact that this positioning is conditioned by a conjunction of factors and by the state of current affairs in the media. In the area of the labor unions, however, the reception has been rather cold, related to the ideological crisis of the traditional labor organizations and unions.

In the first two areas (EU agreements and arms traffic) we have not achieved results due to the geopolitical alignment of Spain and the EU on the side of Israel. Due to the centrality of EU institutions in these two areas, the campaigns in the different European countries will need to better coordinate in order to mount the necessary continent-wide challenge. On the other hand, in the other two areas we have obtained a few successes and, above all, have started the large-scale dissemination of campaign materials and information. It appears, therefore, that there is great potential for the campaign to move forward in the consumer and cultural boycotts.

We consider that the BDS campaign is very important for mobilizing consciences and the solidarity with Palestine in our country. It is the answer to that question which so many people and solidarity organizations put to us: "What can we do from here to help the Palestinian people?" Well, we can listen to the Palestinian voices and do what they are asking us to do: build and push forward the BDS campaign. We also consider it very important that our boycott initiatives have some tangible effect on Israel in some way. That an artist or academic declines an invitation, that a Spanish company informs an Israeli supplier that their products provoke rejection or that Palestinian banners are seen on Israeli television sets during the Maccabi games. This is our way of contributing to Israel's understanding that its policy has a cost and that the world will not consider it a normal country until it changes.

Organization and activities working for boycott of Israel in Sweden

by Tove Myhrman



More on the Campaign at:

Palestinagrupperna i Sverige

www.palestinagrupperna.se

Bojkott Israel Network

www.bojkotta-israel.nu

Svrnska Kyrkan

www.svenskakyrkan.se

Svenska Missionskyrkan

www.missionskyrkan.se

BDS protest in Sweden. Photo by Anna Wester courtesy of PGS.

In Sweden, the general public is largely aware of the need to boycott Israeli agricultural products such as avocado and citrus fruits due to a long standing understanding of the illegitimacy and criminality of Israeli policies and practices. However, there is a more alarming trend in the official Swedish-Israeli governmental relationship. Some organizations in the country have worked actively to highlight and counteract this.

The organization that worked the longest to mobilise behind BDS is the NGO Palestine Solidarity Association of Sweden (PGS), which first launched boycott initiatives in the 1980s. At present, activists in PGS believe that it is a central priority to focus Palestine solidarity work against Swedish-Israeli military cooperation, the EU-Israel Association Agreement, as well as demanding the exclusion of Israeli cultural, academic and sports representatives unless they publicly condemn the occupation of the Palestinian Territories.

Some of the PGS's activities are especially worth mentioning. In 2006 the organisation produced a report revealing information about Sweden's military cooperation with Israel, information not previously well-known among the general public. PGS managed, in August that year, to get an article published in the country's largest morning newspaper *Dagens Nyheter*. The article presented this information and demanded that the Swedish government terminate the military cooperation with Israel. This generated an intensive debate, which led some prominent political groups to take strong public positions condemning the Swedish-Israeli military cooperation.

The organization has sent out letters to several of the leading universities in the country. The letters encourage universities not to cooperate with Israeli academic institutions or to individual academics who do not condemn the Israeli occupation.

Global BDS Movement

PGS has also been active in raising awareness about the fact that international companies, such as Caterpillar and Swedish-made Volvo machines are used by the Israeli army to destroy Palestinian homes and infrastructure on both sides of the Green Line. PGS sent letters to these companies' representatives in Sweden, demanding that they stop selling these machines to Israel as long as the Israeli army uses these machines in their commission of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Finally, through its webpage and other campaign activities, PGS encourages the general public to boycott Israeli products.

Some of PGS's work in Sweden has received notable attention in the media and led to debate about trade and other cooperation with Israel. At the same time, representatives of PGS point out that it has been difficult to get full support for boycott and sanctions against Israel. Old traditions of unquestionable support for Israel still prevail among some politicians and parts of the public in Sweden.

In addition to PGS's work, there are other smaller organizations that have been active in the Swedish BDS campaign. In 2003, a network called Boycott Israel Now, was officially formed. The network's main aim is not to negatively affect Israel's economy or trade, but rather to engage people and organizations against Israel's oppression and occupation of the Palestinians and their land. The main aim of the proposed boycott is to facilitate individual and organizational participation in the struggle for a free Palestine. The network came to include several Swedish organisations that have been part of the solidarity movement for Palestine, such as the International Solidarity Movement (ISM) Sweden, the Palestine Solidarity Association of Sweden (PGS), the Palestinian Association, as well as the youth wings of some of the smaller left political parties' in the Swedish parliament.

The platform of the Boycott Israel Now network was agreed upon by the member organizations, and

- Encourages individuals to not buy products from Israel or to take tourist trips there;
- Encourages companies and Swedish authorities not to do business with Israel or Israeli companies;
- Demands that the Swedish government work within the EU for cancellation of the EU-Israel Association Agreement;
- Demands that the Swedish government stops all military trade with Israel.

However, the campaign has primarily focused on informing the general public about how they can actively boycott Israeli goods sold in stores around Sweden. For example, over 250,000 informational stickers and flyers have been distributed to the Swedish general public during demonstrations and pickets outside stores selling Israeli products.

The network's activities have decreased over the last years. Presently the network focuses mostly on disseminating information about different ways to boycott Israel and protest against its occupation policies through its website. Nevertheless, when the network was most active, it managed to publish a debate article in *Dagens Nyheter*



Volvo bulldozer destroying the home of Palestinian citizen of Israel Khaled al Nasasra living in the unrecognized Naqab village of Abu Solub on 17 January 2006. Photo courtesy of Regional Council for Unrecognized Villages.

which highlighted Sweden's import of Israeli military goods and Sweden's military cooperation with Israel. The article was signed by several prominent people among them Sten Andersson a former Minister of Foreign Affairs. The article contributed to a general debate about the issue in Sweden, which in turn contributed to prevention of the Swedish army from participation in an international military training to which the Israeli army was invited.

The Boycott Israel Now network has also tried to mobilize other groups in Sweden, such as labour unions behind the demand to boycott of Israeli goods and sanctions against representatives of Israel. However, this has been an uphill battle. Ammar Makboul, representative of Boycott Israel Now says that this can be partly explained by looking at the limited support of the boycott campaign by representatives of the Palestinian Authority. According to Makboul, representatives from the PA have been invited to conferences and events in Sweden during which they have encouraged Sweden and the EU to support free trade between Israel, Palestine and the EU. This has caused confusion among politicians and organizations in Sweden about where to stand in regards to the boycott of Israel.

In response to a request from churches in the Middle East, several Swedish churches have organised themselves to provide support for a just peace and end of the Israeli occupation. The HOPP-campaign was launched in the spring of 2004. The campaign had several activities aiming at contributing to peace and end of the occupation, and includes boycott activities. However, the campaign does not support boycott of Israel as such, but of products from Israeli settlements.

Examples are:

- Demanding that the trade under the EU-Israel Association Agreement adhere to the clause binding EU countries to boycott settlement products;
- Encouraging the Swedish government and parliament to ensure that products from Israeli settlements on occupied territory not reach Sweden or the EU.
- Encouraging the Swedish public not to buy products from Israeli settlements on occupied territory.

The campaign was supported by several of the main Churches in Sweden, including the Church of Sweden. However, it has also led to intensive debate within the Christian community in Sweden about whether it was right or wrong to support the campaign. The Churches that had chosen to stand behind the campaign provided extensive information about the situation in Palestine and backed up their support with rights-based arguments. The campaign ended in December 2005. Since then there have been similar but smaller initiatives within the different churches, organized primarily by church youth groups. The Church of Sweden's emphasis that it still works for a just peace in the Middle East also continues.

Representatives of the Church of Sweden point out that the campaign raised awareness among many of the church members around a just peace in the Middle East. At the same time, many understood it as a boycott against Israel. This was because they could or did not want to differentiate between boycott of products from settlements and products from Israel more generally. The campaign also managed to raise awareness about the EU-Israel Association Agreement. The campaign managed to convince Swedish authorities to prevent import under the Agreement of settlement products.

In conclusion, it could be said that there are or have been different initiatives in Sweden to boycott and enforce sanctions against Israel or products from Israeli settlements. However, the boycott movement was more active in the beginning of the second *Intifada* and activities have since then declined. The popular support for boycott of Israeli products or cultural or sport exchange has also varied over time. It was for example nearly impossible for shops to sell Israeli fruits and vegetables in the early years of the second *Intifada*, but these products have found their way back onto Swedish supermarket shelves. There is also less evident public protest against Israeli participation in sport and cultural events.

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Swiss-Israeli Relations and the Swiss BDS Campaign

by Urs Diethelm

More on the Campaign at:

BDS Info

www.bds-info.ch

Collectif Urgence Palestine

www.urgencepalestine.ch

*BDS protest. Photo courtesy of
Basel Palestine Solidarity Group*



The three main arenas of Swiss-Israeli cooperation are economic, military and scientific. Since the end of the 1990s, Switzerland has expanded its cooperation with Israel in spite of the fact that there has been a marked increase in human rights abuses since the outbreak of the second Intifada, and that the oppression of the Palestinian people has been more exposed to public scrutiny.

Switzerland, as a member of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) since 1993, has concluded a free trade agreement with Israel. The agreement is actually limited to products from Israel within the 1949 armistice lines. Products from the territories Israel occupied in 1967 are not included, but these settlement products find their way into the European and Swiss market falsely labelled "Made in Israel." Countries belonging to the EFTA and member states of the EU, who also subscribed to this agreement, have failed to take effective measures against this misleading labelling. Ignoring Israeli violation of the agreement, the Swiss government concluded a new tax agreement with Israel in 2003 in order to encourage bilateral investments.

Switzerland has an export surplus to Israel, especially in the trade of diamonds, pharmaceutical products and chemicals, machines and clocks. Diamonds account for half of these goods as Switzerland exports twice as many diamonds to Israel as it imports from Israel. Swiss diamond merchants acquire most of their uncut diamonds principally from the African continent, and export them to Israel for finishing. Only some of the finished gems return to Swiss jewellers (for example to the clock and jewelry fair in Basel, now known as Basel World).

For Switzerland, Israel is an important trade partner (1.2 – 1.8 % of its total in exports), and Swiss investments in Israel come reached around 1/2 billion francs.

Military Cooperation

Israel is the fourth largest arms exporter in the world. Switzerland is a comparatively small importer of Israeli weapons (roughly 10% of all the arms Switzerland imports). Switzerland has exported armaments to Israel since 1955. The Swiss armament industry benefits from the ‘experience’ Israel has acquired in weapons manufacturing. A special spot in the Naqab (Negev) desert is set aside specifically for any munitions testing that Swiss firms wish to carry out, and Swiss arms firms (Contraves of Oerlikon and RUAG) and Israel Aircraft Industries (IAI) collaborate regularly. Switzerland is also developing the ADS 95 reconnaissance drone; the Swiss government has contributed 28 million francs to work on the drone and exonerated Israel from repaying this sum. The RUAG weapons factory (owned by the Swiss government) has also cooperated with Israeli arms manufacturers on the development of cluster bombs. Since 1988, the Swiss army has spent 600 million francs on cluster bomb research in Israel; some of the cluster bombs unleashed on Lebanon in the war of the summer of 2006 were the direct result of this cooperation.

Following Israel’s 2002 reinvasion of the West Bank in ‘Operation Defensive Shield,’ the Swiss government temporarily suspended new purchases from Israeli arms manufacturers. It was not long, however, before the Swiss signed an agreement to cooperate on an electronic reconnaissance system: the ‘Instaff’ system to guide missiles or shells to their target. In the middle of March 2005, Swiss federal counsellor Schmid announced the resumption of arms purchases from Israel on an official visit there. The Swiss government and parliament accordingly approved the purchase of a surveillance system for listening and transmitting (its main use is for electronic warfare) to the tune of 150 million francs. Counsellor Schmid’s visit made it clear that relations with Israel would soon be back to normal.

Scientific Research

Israel and Switzerland have also initiated cooperation in the field of research and development. Swiss state universities (ETH in Zürich and EPFL in Lausanne) have already established exchanges with the Weizmann Institute in Rehovot. In May 2000, federal counsellor Ruth Dreifuss made an official visit to Israel to promote cooperation on scientific research. Israel and Switzerland are both participating in the fourth European Union program for research and technological development.

The Boycott Campaign

In 2003, we called for a boycott of Israeli products with the support of 29 different organizations. We undertook different actions and mailing appeals to persuade the two largest supermarket chain stores in Switzerland not to carry Israeli products. Under the Swiss food law, it is illegal to market products from Israeli settlements falsely labelled “Made in Israel,” and the average consumer has no means of distinguishing between produce from Israel and produce originating in a settlement. We met with no success in our attempts to alert the federal inspection body to this illegal practice. Inspection officials referred us to the political authorities, who endorsed the misleading labels.

Two years later, we initiated a national campaign against the resumption of arms purchases from Israel.



Supermarket actions often involve putting up reminders for shoppers not to buy Israeli products. Photo courtesy of Basel Palestine Solidarity Group

Global BDS Movement

The campaign involved collecting 14,000 signatures against this arms trade, on the basis of which motions against the resumption of arms purchases from Israel were introduced in the federal parliament.



Sporting event disruption as part of the BDS campaign. September 2005, photo courtesy of Basel Palestine Solidarity Group.

At this time, there are two solidarity committees, in German-speaking and

French-speaking Switzerland, working to build the BDS campaign. In addition, members of other solidarity committees also support the campaign. The Basel BDS group has a website in German and in French that provides background information on the issues at stake and on current activities. In addition, every six months, we publish a four-page BDS bulletin, of which we distribute 1200 copies and which we send to interested persons and also hand out for free on the street. For the 60 years of the Nakba commemorations, 37,000 notices explaining the BDS campaign were distributed as inserts in newspapers. The small Swiss Communist party is currently discussing whether or not to support the BDS campaign. We are also launching a concrete campaign against Veolia (the East Jerusalem tramway system project).

The BDS committee of the Basel area Palestine Solidarity Group is presently sending out information, mainly on the progress of the BDS campaign (in Switzerland and on an international level) and trying to recruit activists and convince them to join forces based on a united national BDS platform. In our opinion, this strategy offers several possibilities for building concrete political pressure on Israel to change its policy as outlined in the BDS appeal.

However, there are aggravating circumstances which make such a united appeal difficult, namely the fragmentation of the local solidarity and progressive movements and their differences of opinion. The thematic confinement of discussion to the occupation and humanitarian aid for the needy population in Palestine presents a challenge for convincing activists here to prioritize solidarity over charity and pull together on the BDS campaign. Our goal in this context is to foster the establishment of local BDS groups throughout Switzerland in order to build a stronger and more pragmatic action-oriented campaign.

Work to promote the BDS campaign in Switzerland would be considerably easier if the BDS movement were more developed in France (for French-speaking Switzerland) and Germany (for German-speaking Switzerland) and Italy (for Italian-speaking Switzerland). Political campaigns in the European countries where the same language is spoken as in Switzerland heavily influence the success of similar campaigns in our country. For this reason, we do all we can to contribute to BDS campaigns in the countries bordering on Switzerland. This is also why we participated in the BDS conference in London, which set as its goal to enhance the BDS campaign on the Continent.



Stickers produced as part of the campaign are used to mark Israeli products otherwise unidentified as such. Photo courtesy of Basel Palestine Solidarity Group

**Urs Diethelm is a member of the Basel area Palestine Solidarity Group.*

In the Belly of the Beast: Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Campaigns in the United States

by Abraham Greenhouse



Land Day protest on 29 March 2008 in New York City incorporating street theater and oral history of the Nakba and Land Day into a call for BDS. Photo courtesy of Adalah-NY.

Of all of the countries in which campaigns for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions have been initiated, none is as intimately tied to Israel – economically, politically, and socially – as the United States. Indeed, the United States military-industrial complex forms the umbilical cord that sustains the apartheid state of Israel, and which, if severed, would likely cause the entire Zionist enterprise to wither and perish. Not even the combined economic might of the massive nongovernmental American Zionist establishment is enough to supply the vast military infrastructure that allows Israel to survive as the last colonial state in a post-colonial world

From churches and universities, to corporate boardrooms and Federal courts, to the chambers of City Halls and the streets of cities across the country, U.S.-based activists have been waging a relentless campaign to cleave the multilayered lifeline that sustains Israel's brutal oppression of the Palestinian people. Predating the Palestinian Civil Society BDS Call by nearly five years, such campaigns have gradually become a major vehicle, and frequently the dominant vehicle, for the majority of the approximately eight hundred Palestine solidarity organizations active in the United States. By examining their successes, as well as their failures, it is possible to derive lessons to inform and invigorate both existing efforts, and campaigns yet to come – not only within the United States, but throughout the world.

Fighting City Hall: Divestment Campaigns in Seattle and Somerville

In the words of one insider, the five-year-old campaign to force the City of Seattle, Washington, to divest from US companies

More on the Campaign at:

U.S. Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation

www.endtheoccupation.org

Adalah-NY

www.adalahny.org

Palestine Freedom Project

www.palestinefreedom.org

Palestine Solidarity Committee (Seattle)

www.palestineinformation.org

Seattle Divest from War and Occupation

www.divestfromwar.org

Somerville Divestment Project

www.divestmentproject.org

Students for Justice in Palestine, UC Berkeley

www.calsjp.org

Palestine Solidarity Movement

www.palestinesolidaritymovement.org

Al-Awda Wisconsin

<http://alawda.rso.wisc.edu>

University of Michigan - Dearborn Student resolutions on divestment

www-personal.umd.umich.edu/~skrbina/student_res.html

Jewish Voice for Peace

www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org

supplying military hardware to Israel is “driving the Zionists bonkers.” The Seattle campaign and a younger effort underway in Somerville, Massachusetts, have received extensive press attention, and have so alarmed opposition groups that national anti-Palestinian organizations have seen fit to embroil themselves in these local struggles. Shaped around long-term strategies tailored to the unique characteristics of each city, the campaigns provide important lessons for activists interested in pursuing similar initiatives in their own municipalities.

The Seattle City Employees’ Retirement System (SCERS) controls over two billion dollars in assets, over half of which is invested in corporate securities in the United States and abroad. Administered by dozens of fund managers, each with the authority to invest a portion of the total funds as they see fit, SCERS’ involvement with companies tied to the Israeli military is complex, and can only be quantitatively assessed by examining the quarterly and annual reports of the individual fund managers. Nevertheless, Seattle organizers in 2003 decided to target SCERS, which had previously voted to divest from apartheid South Africa, as the centerpiece of a campaign that would educate city officials and local citizens’ groups on the realities of the Israeli regime, stimulate public debate, and potentially effect tangible changes in city policy.

The City of Somerville, a working-class suburb of Boston with a large immigrant population, currently invests an estimated \$1.2 million dollars in companies supplying military equipment and arms to Israel, as well as \$250,000 in Israeli government bonds, through its Retirement Board. One year after the inception of the Seattle effort, and partly modeled on it, a divestment campaign was launched. The organizers, the Somerville Divestment Project (SDP), believing that Somerville residents would more readily relate to the suffering of Palestinians than would residents of more affluent communities, broadened the scope of their demands beyond those of the Seattle campaigners to include divestment from Israel Bonds; bonds issued by the Israeli state.

An organizer of the Seattle campaign, Edward Mast, explained that organizers there felt that calling for bond divestment, or for divestment from all companies with ties to Israel, would cause the City Council to dismiss the campaign outright, without any serious consideration. “It’s a lot like building a legal case,” says Mast. “You don’t always want to start out asking for more and then negotiate down. Sometimes, it’s more important to establish a precedent. We were always thinking long-term.”

In its earliest days, the campaign consisted largely of a public call for SCERS to divest from seven specific companies, including Caterpillar, and urging its supporters to lobby city officials in favor of such a move. The campaign’s organizers met early on with the head of SCERS, as well as its Board of Directors, who claimed they had no mandate to divest on moral/ethical grounds (although one member privately admitted that in a hypothetical scenario, the involvement of a company in child pornography, would likely cause SCERS to take such an action). Initially, the City Council refused to meet with the organizers at all.

“If I had it to do over again, I would have made a much greater effort to win over just one ally on the Council, which would have made the rest of our work far easier,” says Mast. Researching the complex social dynamics at work within a given institution is a must for any campaign seeking to influence it, he explains. “You need a solid understanding of their personal relationships, loyalties, spheres of influence, and so on, to the point that you can actually diagram it. We got some help from a former Council member, who offered us advice on how to approach his colleagues. This resulted in our campaign entering a new phase: while still maintaining our call for divestment, we simultaneously pursued a more limited goal of ‘constructive engagement.’ When asking for what we believed would be the minimum action they could take that would be useful to us -- a letter of concern from Seattle City Council to Caterpillar -- we were able to meet and make some headway with most of the Council members.”

Mast explains that this phase of the campaign provided the group with valuable lessons. “We spoke with an aid of one of the Council members who had concerns about some of the language in the letter we drafted. Many were about imagery: specific, detailed anecdotes about homes being demolished are useful and important in most contexts, but when trying to get officials to



Somerville Divestment Project members pose for a picture as they lobby the municipality to call for Israeli implementation of the Palestinian refugees' right of return. Photo by Ron Francis

participate, we've sometimes had more success with a less emotional approach. Another important suggestion from the Council aid was to change our language to state that Caterpillar's activities *may* be illegal [under the United States Arms Control Export Act], rather than saying that they *are* illegal, because they'd challenge that by asking why the Federal government allows them to continue."

Without an ally on the Council who was willing to go beyond tacit support to actually spearhead an effort to produce the letter, the campaign stalled. However,

new energy has come recently from endorsing and participating in another local Seattle campaign: a ballot initiative, created by Divest From War, calling for the City of Seattle to divest from US companies that profit from war and occupation throughout the Middle East. Joining this broader campaign was a logical next step for divestment organizers, says Mast. "Our work has always been part of a larger commitment to social justice around the world," he explains, "and participating in broader campaigns defuses any claim that we're singling out Israel."

In Somerville, the emphasis was shifted to a ballot initiative after the council voted down a divestment resolution that a majority of council members had endorsed a month earlier. The campaign succeeded in convincing 35% of the electorate to vote in favor of divestment, and 40% for a separate resolution supporting the Palestinian right of return. SDP focused heavily on door-to-door canvassing, to which they largely attribute the relative success of their campaign, while noting that their limited number of volunteers proved to be a massive obstacle. "Not only were we short on people campaigning throughout the year, but on the day of elections, we didn't have enough people manning election sites," said one organizer; "people power is key to the success of this work." To retain volunteers, she explained, it is vital to "make sure people are appreciated and not overworked," lest they burn out.

Anti-Palestinian organizations, including the Boston-based David Project, actively opposed both efforts, but were particularly active in combating the Somerville campaign, attending Council meetings, flooding the local press with calls and letters, and posting signs throughout the town urging people to vote against the ballot initiatives. SDP was unable to muster a similar level of support from sympathetic organizers, but performed admirably despite limited resources. Since the last ballot initiative, organizers have shifted their attention to educational work in neighboring communities.

The experiences of the Seattle and Somerville campaigns demonstrate the importance of meticulous research and planning, and a long-term strategy in which educating officials and members of the public is understood as an end in itself. "Patience is key," said one SDP member, explaining that a campaign can involve "years of education and counter-education."

Understanding the web of personal relationships among decision-makers and their aids, and adjusting language and tactics accordingly, is also vital. Finally, emphasis must be placed on recruitment and retention, as well as the cultivation of external allies, in order for a campaign to be sustainable. Drawing on the lessons of these two campaigns, it seems likely that future efforts to affect divestment on a municipal level will meet with even greater success.

Shaking the Foundations of the Ivory Tower: Divestment on Campus

Predating the 2005 Palestinian Civil Society BDS call by nearly five years, campaigns pressuring colleges and universities to divest from Israel dominated the landscape of Palestine solidarity activism in the United States during the first three years of the second Intifada. A November 2000 speech by international law professor Francis Boyle calling for divestment from Israel as a means of supporting the Palestinian struggle was subsequently published as an open call. The speech was widely read and discussed by student activists, and the campus divestment movement which emerged attracted copious media attention, stimulated massive public debate, and sent anti-Palestinian activists flying into a panic. While the momentum of BDS campaigns in the U.S. eventually began to shift outside of the academy with the growth of divestment efforts by faith-based organizations, the campus-based movement won a number of precedent-setting victories before beginning to wane.

The first university community to launch a formal divestment campaign, the University of California – Berkeley, began its efforts within months of Boyle’s historic speech. Through a combination of educational outreach, theatrical demonstrations, petition drives, and even building occupations, Berkeley’s Students for Justice in Palestine, the first group to employ the name, swiftly ignited a firestorm of controversy, making national and international headlines. By the close of the academic year, dozens of similar campaigns had sprung up on campuses across the U.S., many of which also utilized the ‘SJP’ moniker as a means of symbolically linking the initiatives.

Modeling itself on the anti-apartheid divestment campaigns of the 1980s, campus divestment rapidly evolved into a national, and soon international, movement. In February 2002, Berkeley convened a forum designated as the “National Student Conference of the Palestine Solidarity Movement.” Postponed from its original date of September, 2001 as a result of the 9/11 attacks, the conference birthed the coalition known as the Palestine Solidarity Movement, which swiftly assumed a leading role in coordinating the activities of Palestine solidarity organizations in the U.S., both on campus and beyond.

While the majority of campaigns advocated full divestment from all companies doing business with Israel, some limited their calls to specific companies deemed to be directly profiting from the post-1967 occupation. One campaign, at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, pressured the administration to establish an ethical investment committee, similar to entities established at several other universities, providing a mechanism that could subsequently be utilized to press for divestment. Although the availability of information regarding the composition of each university’s portfolio varied according to its status as a public or private institution, all campaigns focused on university investment dollars, to the exclusion of the considerable purchasing power wielded through the awarding or denial of vendor contracts.

Anti-Palestinian organizations were caught off guard by the sudden emergence of such a formidable movement, and were placed immediately on the defensive. Divestment campaigners, most observers agree, held the upper hand throughout the 2001-2002 academic year, buoyed by a groundswell of sympathy for the Palestinian struggle that emerged with the brutal April 2002 reoccupation of the West Bank. By the following September, however, the opposition had taken advantage of the summer lull in organizing to develop new strategies for silencing campus critics of Israel, and had founded several key organizations to help focus their efforts.

These new groups included the David Project, which initially specialized in attacking ‘problematic’ faculty; Stand With Us, an uncharacteristically grassroots effort with a substantial campus wing; and the DC-based Israel Project. The latter organization

New York City Labor against War

23 March 2008 Statement

Israel's war on Palestine depends completely on U.S. money, weapons and approval. Since 1948, Israel — the top foreign aid recipient — has received at least \$108 billion from the U.S. government. In the past ten years alone, U.S. military aid was \$17 billion; over the next decade, it will be \$30 billion. Israel's recent assault on Gaza was endorsed by a Congressional vote of 404-1. Democratic and Republican presidential candidates fall over themselves to offer more of the same. On March 22, Dick Cheney reassured Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of "America's . . . commitment to Israel's right to defend itself always against terrorism, rocket attacks and other threats," and that the U.S. and Israel are "friends — special friends."

This "special friendship" means that, as in Afghanistan and Iraq, it is U.S. aircraft, cluster bombs and bullets that kill and maim on behalf of the occupiers. Just one of many targets was the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions headquarters in Gaza City, destroyed by F-16s on February 28. Such support bolsters Israel's longstanding role as watchdog and junior partner for U.S. domination over the oil-rich Middle East — and beyond. In that capacity, Israel was apartheid South Africa's closest ally. After 9/11, it helped intensify the demonization of Arabs and Muslims. It has 200 nuclear weapons, but helped manufacture "evidence" of Iraqi WMD. With U.S. weapons and support, it invaded Lebanon in 2006. Together, these wars and occupations have killed, maimed and displaced millions of people, thereby creating the world's largest humanitarian crisis. Now, Israel is the cutting edge of threats against Syria and Iran.

In other words, oppression and resistance in Palestine is the epicenter of U.S.-Israeli war throughout the Middle East. These stakes are reflected in the ferocity of Israel's attacks against Gaza.

LABOR'S ROLE

In Palestine, South Africa, Britain, Canada and other countries, labor has condemned Israeli Apartheid. Workers in the United States pay a staggering human and financial price, including deepening economic crisis, for U.S.-Israeli war and occupation. But through a combination of intent, ignorance and/or expediency, much of labor officialdom in this country — often without the knowledge or consent of union members — is an accomplice of Israeli Apartheid.

Some 1,500 labor bodies have plowed at least \$5 billion of union pension funds and retirement plans into State of Israel Bonds. In April 2002, while Israel butchered Palestinian refugees at Jenin in the West Bank, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney was a featured speaker at a belligerent "National Solidarity Rally for Israel." In 2006, leadership of the American Federation of Teachers embraced Israel's war on Lebanon. These same leaders collaborate with attempts by the Jewish Labor Committee (JLC) to silence Apartheid Israel's opponents — many of whom are Jewish. In July 2007, top officials of the AFL-CIO and Change to Win signed a JLC statement that condemned British unions for even considering the nonviolent campaign for boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel.

Just days ago, the JLC and the leadership of UNITE-HERE bullied a community organization in Boston into revoking space for a conference on "Zionism and the Repression of Anti-Colonial Movements." [...] Labor leaders' complicity parallels infamous "AFL-CIA" support for U.S. war and dictatorship in Vietnam, Latin America, Gulf War I, Afghanistan and elsewhere. It strengthens the U.S.-Israeli war machine and labor's corporate enemies, reinforces racism and Islamophobia, and makes a mockery of international solidarity.

A NECESSARY STAND

More than forty years ago, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. came under intense public attack for opposing the Vietnam war. Even within the Civil Rights Movement, some dismissed his position too "divisive" and "unpopular." In his famous speech at the Riverside Church in April 1967, Dr. King answered these critics by pointing out that "silence is betrayal," and that "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today . . . [is] my own government." At the National Labor Leadership Assembly for Peace in November 1967, he reiterated the most basic principles of labor solidarity: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. . . . Ultimately a genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus but a molder of consensus." These principles are no less relevant today.

Yes, the Israel lobby seeks to silence opponents of Israeli Apartheid. All the more need for trade unionists to break that silence by speaking out against Israeli military occupation, for the right of Palestinian refugees to return, and for the elimination of apartheid throughout historic Palestine. Therefore, we reaffirm our support for an immediate and total:

1. End to U.S. military and economic support for Israel.
2. Divestment of business and labor investments in Israel.
3. Withdrawal of U.S. and allied forces from the Middle East.

Visit: <http://nyclaw01.wordpress.com>

dabbled ineffectually in confronting divestment activists before shifting its focus to media work. Established groups such as American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), the United Jewish Communities, Hillel, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), and the Jewish Council for Public Affairs (which plays a leading role, but largely behind-the-scenes) became increasingly active in the campus arena, and banded together, along with numerous other groups, to form the multi-million dollar Israel on Campus Coalition, which became the central coordinating mechanism for campus anti-Palestinian activism in the U.S.

Despite mounting opposition on the national level, divestment campaigners succeeded in developing strategies that would enable them to score key victories. In January 2005, activists at the University of Wisconsin – Madison took advantage of the relative absence of opposition on the university’s rural Platteville campus to convince the Faculty Senate there to pass the first-ever divestment resolution by an official university body. A month later, a similar resolution was passed by the Student Government Senate of the University of Michigan – Dearborn. In April, organizers in Madison again succeeded in pushing through a divestment resolution, this time by the university’s Teaching Assistant Association, the largest and oldest teaching assistants union in the country.

“We never considered actual divestment to be the primary goal of our campaign,” says one veteran organizer. “Instead, we understood divestment as a framework around which to *structure* our activities, the major goals of which were to gain media attention and stimulate public debate. Nevertheless, we won some significant symbolic victories that have helped lay the groundwork for achieving actual divestment in the long term. We achieved this by performing months of meticulous research not only into the university’s investments, but into how its bureaucracy functioned. We spent nearly a year preparing the campaign before it went public, and we went into every meeting knowing exactly who was going to say what and when. The opposition seemed impotent by comparison.”

Between February 2002, when it was formed at the Berkeley conference, and 2006, the Palestine Solidarity Movement (PSM) held four further conferences at the University of Michigan – Ann Arbor, Ohio State University, Duke University, and Georgetown University. The conferences drew huge crowds, but also became magnets for attacks from the opposition, which would regularly pressure host universities to cancel the conference. At its peak, the PSM represented nearly every campus-based Palestine solidarity organization in the United States, several in Canada, and a large number of non-student groups as well. The annual conferences, and the efforts required to mount them, contributed to a level of communication and coordination between solidarity activists in the U.S. that has not been equaled since.

Ultimately, the PSM collapsed under its own weight. Internal disagreement over the coalition’s political platform, particularly a statement explicitly refusing to condemn Palestinian attacks on civilians, prevented the group from realizing its ambition to develop an elaborate support structure to nurture and sustain the broader movement. Further, the Palestine solidarity community in the U.S. has often been divided along sectarian lines, and it was not unheard of for elements within a group to seize control through undemocratic means. After a series of incidents widely perceived within PSM as comprising such an attempted takeover, the coalition, intent on foiling further attempts, became increasingly bureaucratic. Eventually, it became nearly impossible to remain substantially engaged with PSM while continuing to be active in local organizing. This, along with the natural attrition of a student-based movement, and the transfer of momentum into faith-based efforts, eventually led to PSM’s demise. “We were a *coalition* in a community that really needed a *network*,” says one former PSMer. “If we had defined ourselves more loosely, refusing to get bogged down in ideological minutia, we could have accomplished much more.”

While the PSM has been effectively defunct for more than two years, divestment campaigns have not disappeared from American universities. They are fewer, numbering around a dozen, and coordination between them is limited. This trend, however, is beginning to show signs of reversing, as an increasing number of campuses in the United States and worldwide have begun participating in an annual coordinated week of action, originally launched in Toronto, called Israeli Apartheid Week. It remains to be seen whether the informal networks forged from this initiative will evolve into a mechanism for year-round coordination on a broader scale, which most observers agree is vitally needed.

Palestine Solidarity Netwar: the Case of Caterpillar

Caterpillar, commonly known as CAT, is the world's largest manufacturer of construction and mining equipment, diesel and natural gas engines, and industrial gas turbines. It is also the world's leading symbol of corporate profiteering from Palestinian suffering. According to a fact sheet distributed by the Center for Constitutional Rights, the company "has violated international, federal and state law" by supplying bulldozers to the Israeli military, knowing that they would be used to destroy civilian homes and infrastructure. Aided and abetted by Caterpillar, Israel has destroyed over 18,000 homes, uprooted hundreds of thousands of olive trees, and assembled the apartheid infrastructure that has consigned millions to live in misery for the crime of being born Palestinian.

Human rights organizations began publicly assailing Caterpillar over its complicity in Israeli war crimes in 1989. The first formal campaign against CAT was launched in 2001, and the call for Caterpillar to cease supplying equipment to Israel swiftly became a rallying cry throughout the global Palestine solidarity movement. Dozens of existing organizations took up the call, and new groups were formed specifically to advocate around the issue. The campaign differed from most other initiatives of solidarity activists in that it was, partially by default, and partially by design, almost completely decentralized. Large organizations, such as Jewish Voice for Peace and the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation not only threw themselves into the fray, but along with smaller groups, most notably the Chicago-based Stop CAT Coalition, made a deliberate effort to develop resources that could be utilized by other activists wishing to become involved. By accessing information and materials posted on a variety of web sites, activists anywhere could become autonomous parts of the rapidly expanding campaign.

This decentralization encouraged activists to adopt a diverse range of tactics. Demonstrations were held outside (and briefly inside) CAT's corporate headquarters. Organizations such as Jewish Voice for Peace purchased nominal amounts of Caterpillar stock, enabling them, in 2004, to introduce the first-ever shareholder resolution in an American corporation to address the Israeli occupation, introducing further resolutions in each subsequent year to date. In a manner reminiscent of the animal rights movement, the locations of CAT distributors, as well as home and business addresses of CAT board members were posted on the internet, making it easier for activists to carry the struggle to a local level. Large institutional investors, such as the Presbyterian Church (USA), while reluctant to divest from Caterpillar immediately, began passing resolutions mandating themselves to pursue the issue through direct engagement with the company. In 2005, the parents of Rachel Corrie, an activist killed by a CAT D9 bulldozer in Gaza, filed suit against the corporation in a United States District court, later joined by four Palestinian families who had lost their homes to Caterpillar equipment.

"The fact that Caterpillar has been hit on all of these fronts simultaneously has been key to our success," said one longtime organizer on the campaign. "However, we're limited in what we can achieve based on the size of our movement, and so growing it needs to be a top priority. I don't mean just growing our own organizations either; we need to be encouraging other groups to make the campaign a *part* of their overall work. If we can convince a huge organization like the Presbyterian Church to dedicate even two percent of its time to working on this, the impact of that alone could be enormous."

"In addition to trying to enforce the law, this litigation can be used as an organizing tool," says Maria LaHood, a senior staff attorney at the Center for Constitutional Rights, and among the chief counsel for the plaintiffs in *Corrie et al. v. Caterpillar*. "We've obtained evidence that [Caterpillar CEO] Jim Owens isn't telling the full story when he claims that Caterpillar has no control over the sales to Israel because they are indirect. Caterpillar *has* sold its D9 bulldozers directly to Israel, although there's evidence that the United States government has *paid* for some of them." While the case was dismissed by the District Court, a decision later affirmed by a Court of Appeals *because* the U.S. paid for the sales, LaHood and her colleagues continue to press forward. "Even if we don't win, the litigation has obtained information that wouldn't otherwise be available. There's also a tremendous benefit in using the litigation to raise awareness about the victims of Caterpillar's complicity and to keep the issue alive by providing activists with continuing opportunities to mobilize around. So it's important for activists to keep up the pressure now, but even more so if the litigation doesn't succeed: It's up to the people to hold corporations accountable if the courts won't."

As a target, Caterpillar combines a number of unique strengths. Documentation of the company's equipment being utilized in the destruction of Palestinian infrastructure has been compiled by human rights organizations for two decades. Although the company derives a very limited portion of its revenue from consumer goods, such as toys and apparel featuring the company logo, it boasts an extremely well-developed brand identity. In the minds of the American public, the Caterpillar brand is firmly cemented, partly due to CAT equipment being a ubiquitous sight at construction sites throughout the country. Activists on other campaigns, particularly the Coalition of Immokalee Workers in their boycott of Taco Bell and other subsidiaries of Yum! Brands, have clearly demonstrated the value of incorporating a target company's own brand motifs into its messaging, effectively turning multi-billion dollar advertising campaigns back against themselves.

The most commonly cited weakness of Caterpillar as a target is its limited involvement in consumer goods markets. As the overwhelming majority of the global population has no role in rental or purchase of heavy equipment, possibilities for a consumer boycott are limited. However, institutions are able to exert considerable pressure by threatening divestment, as well as by denying contracts to vendors utilizing CAT equipment. To date, no organization involved in the Caterpillar campaign has targeted such contracts. Further, divestment efforts have been limited to churches, universities, and municipalities, and have not yet expanded their focus to include commercial investors such as mutual funds, which have recently been targeted by activists campaigning for divestment from Sudan.

Although the overall campaign against Caterpillar has lost some degree of momentum since its peak in approximately 2005, attributable to the cumulative effect of small setbacks such as the dismissal of the Corrie case and general activist burnout, the trend shows signs of reversing itself. At CAT's 2008 shareholders meeting, activists held their first-ever face-to-face meetings with the company's CEO and Board of Directors. "It's actually a very exciting time for the campaign," says StopCAT organizer Matt Gaines. Suha Dabbouseh, National Organizer for the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation, adds that "after [the meeting], I think we have renewed energy."

Asked to comment on visions for the campaign's future, one longtime organizer stated, "I think we need to get more local. We should identify a handful of key company executives or board members who are based in the areas in which we have strength, and research everything about them: where do they live, what groups do they belong to, what relationships do they have with other key CAT personnel, and so on. We need to leverage that information to place as much pressure as possible on these few specific people until they feel compelled to ask the company to act on our demands. Beyond that, I think it's important that people learn to be patient. We've made incredible gains in this campaign, and while the immense size of the company makes it difficult to see at times, there are cracks emerging in the façade. Now more than ever, we need to keep up the pressure.

Breaking the Heads of Leviathan: The Campaign Against Lev Leviev

Of all profiteers of Israeli settlement construction, few have faced as varied and sustained resistance as Lev Leviev. Primarily known as the world's largest cutter and polisher of diamonds (mined in large part in Angola, where his companies have been accused of multiple human rights violations), Leviev is heavily invested in real estate and construction through his investment and holding company 'Africa-Israel.' His major settlement projects include Zufim, built on land confiscated from the West Bank village of Jayyous, and Matityahu East, which is being constructed on the land of Bil'in, as well as portions of the larger settlements of Har Homa and Ma'ale Adumim. Leviev is also a major donor to the ultra-right-wing Land Redemption Fund, which uses its financial might, deceit, and strong-arm tactics to secure Palestinian land for settlement expansion.

The companies have faced regular protests against their activities by affected Palestinians in Jayyous and Bil'in, often accompanied by anti-Zionist Jewish Israelis and internationals, for the past six years. The protests have been met with overwhelming force by the Israeli military, resulting in hundreds of injuries and tens of arrests. In late 2007, the campaign against the gradual destruction of Jayyous and Bil'in began to take on a new dimension.

Adalah-NY, a New York-based coalition that first emerged in the wake of Israel's 2006 attacks on Lebanon, was asked to develop

a campaign around Leviev's partner, Shaya Boymelgreen, by Palestinian and Israeli activists who were aware of Boymelgreen's Mattityahu East project, and numerous commercial and residential real estate ventures in and around New York City. Many of these New York projects, until a recent split, were developed in partnership with Leviev. Already under fire from local activists accusing him of a litany of labor infractions and dangerously substandard construction, Boymelgreen was a strong and generally unpopular presence in New York. With more research, it became evident that Leviev was involved in more settlement activity than Boymelgreen. When Leviev announced plans to open a new luxury diamond store on Manhattan's Upper-East Side in late 2007, the stage was set for a multi-pronged campaign that would pit activists on three continents against the billionaire and his global business empire.

Leviev and Boymelgreen were selected from a group of several potential targets for Adalah-NY's BDS campaign, in part due to the organization's strong relationships with Palestinian and Israeli activists organizing in Jayyous and Bil'in. In addition to the close ties of Leviev and Boymelgreen to New York City, where the organization is based, the variety of transgressions of which Leviev had been accused presented Adalah-NY with an opportunity to cultivate allies active within a broad range of issue areas. In particular, the organization sought to link the dispossession of Palestinians in the West Bank to issues related to housing and gentrification in local New York communities.

The desire for a strong New York grounding eliminated one of the other targets Adalah-NY was considering. A second target was removed from consideration because it would have necessitated a lengthy and intensive engagement with local government, which Adalah-NY believed would exceed its capacity at that time. Another contender, a local membership-based entity active in a limited geographical area, was eliminated because Adalah-NY members did not possess, and felt they could not reasonably develop, a substantial presence within that entity's membership.

Until this point, Leviev had completely escaped any public relations backlash from his destructive activities. While Africa-Israel and its chairman were ill-prepared to respond to public rebuke, Adalah-NY was well-positioned to deliver it in spades. Members of the group, a majority of whom are longtime solidarity activists, had well-established ties with civil society institutions in Palestine, particularly in Jayyous and Bil'in. Further, they were equipped with a broad array of local, national, and international media contacts, cultivated over years of activist involvement. The campaign's ability to make judicious and effective use of these resources in synergy with its other activities has been a critical factor in its success to date.

The campaign was publicly launched with a demonstration outside the Leviev retail location in New York during its gala opening event on 13 November 2007. Members of Adalah-NY were surprised to see actress Susan Sarandon, well-known for her outspoken support of numerous progressive causes, among the celebrity attendees. Following the event, the organization drafted an open letter to Sarandon, asking her to sever all ties with Leviev. Due to the massive public appetite for celebrity news, the letter generated substantial media coverage.



Alternative Christmas Carols at 22 December 2007 protest against Leviev in New York. Photo courtesy of Adalah-NY.

Shortly afterwards, Adalah-NY contacted the international charity, Oxfam, to which, in an effort to bolster his image, Leviev publicly claimed to support. The group sent Oxfam a detailed backgrounder on Leviev's various infractions, urging them to refuse further donations. Adalah-NY arranged for similar requests to be sent by Palestinian civil society groups. The response from Oxfam was a bombshell: not only would the organization refuse future donations from Leviev, but it had never received the support Leviev had claimed. This gaffe received widespread press attention, particularly within the diamond industry. Behind the scenes, Adalah-NY lobbied UNICEF with which Leviev had also been associated, to cease accepting the billionaire's support. After months of letter writing and meetings, which included UNICEF officials personally touring affected communities in the West Bank, the organization publicly severed all ties with Leviev. A new flurry of media attention ensued, as well as a rebuke from the Anti-Defamation League which claimed that UNICEF's decision amounted to "selective political discrimination."

Leviev's global web of business interests provided Adalah-NY and its allies with the opportunity to engage him on multiple geographic fronts. In New York, the group has paid repeated visits to residential properties owned by Leviev, building relationships with concerned tenants. Demonstrations outside Leviev's Manhattan store have been designed to coincide, and thematically connect with, the three busiest jewelry retail periods: Christmas, Valentine's Day, and Mother's Day. On 9 February 2008, simultaneous demonstrations were held by Adalah-NY in New York, and the UK-based Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Architects and Planners for Justice in Palestine, and Jews for a Just Peace at Leviev's London location. On 9 July 2008, the Village of Bil'in announced that it had filed suit for war crimes in a Canadian court against two Canada-based companies whose murky ownership trails point to Leviev's frequent partner, Shaya Boymelgreen.

When Leviev announced plans to open two new retail locations in Dubai, Adalah-NY and its Palestine-based allies publicized this news, leading to several articles in local and international media. Shortly thereafter, they contacted officials in the United Arab Emirates in a bid to have Leviev's plans blocked. Concerned with their image in the Arab world and abroad, officials publicly stated that Leviev would not be permitted to open his stores as planned. Adalah-NY continues to engage Emirati authorities in an effort to ensure this ban is enforced. Most recently on 23 June 2008, UNICEF has responded to the call by Adalah-NY and others working on the Leviev campaign by announcing that it will no longer accept donations from Leviev.

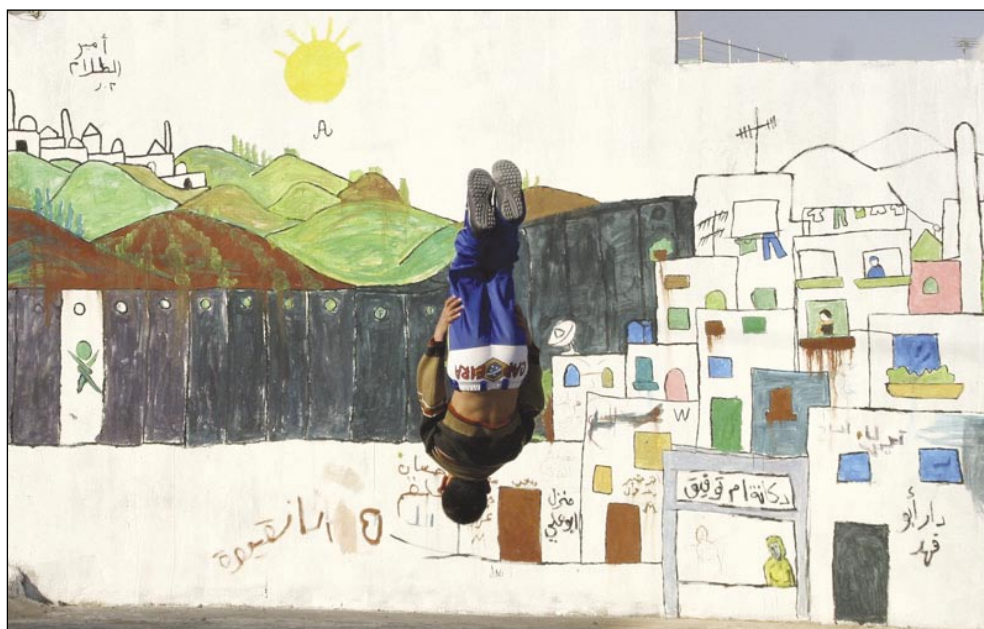
By all measures, the campaign against Lev Leviev has been a runaway success. While there are still areas in which Adalah-NY's efforts have fallen short, such as its failure, so far, to take the fight to the more far-flung corners of Leviev's empire, the campaign's list of achievements to date is remarkable for such a young effort. Most of these accomplishments would not have been possible without the close involvement of Palestine-based allies, underscoring the importance for solidarity groups to cultivate and maintain such relationships.

Although the space allotted to this article has not allowed an exhaustive analysis of any of the campaigns discussed, nor the acknowledgment of countless other individual initiatives equally worthy of inclusion, this overview contains much of the accumulated wisdom of the U.S.-based BDS movement. Readers are urged to educate themselves about other efforts that could not be discussed here, such as the Rainbow BIG Campaign, and the political process that resulted in the passage of a BDS resolution by the Green Party of the United States. It is only by drawing upon the hard-learned lessons of our fellow activists, bypassing the reinvention of the wheel that has dogged so many campaigns to date, that the global movement for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions, as called for by the Palestinian people themselves, can realize its goal of ending over half a century of injustice and oppression.

**Abraham Greenhouse is founder of the Palestine Freedom Project (palestinefreedom.org), which specializes in studying and providing support for the work of grassroots Palestine solidarity activists worldwide. A former member of the Palestine Solidarity Movement, he remains active at a local level as a member of Adalah-NY (adalahny.org).*

Expressions of Nakba: An Introduction

by Serin Atiani



For more information on the competition and to see and hear the winning entries visit:

www.expressionsofnakba.org

Anne Paq, Stronger than the Wall, First Prize Winner – Visual-Arts category.

The National assembly for the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation, a coalition of over 200 organizations, set Nakba-60 commemoration as a priority for 2008. A central reason behind this decision was to use the anniversary as an opportunity to educate the US public on the ongoing effect of the Nakba on the contemporary life of Palestinian refugees.

To achieve these goals and to reach the public beyond the regular base of Palestinian rights activists in the US, the US Campaign launched *Expressions of Nakba*, an arts competition with a theme of remembering the Nakba and its ongoing effects, and celebrating the resilience of the Palestinian people. The competition consisted of five different creative categories: Written Work, Recorded Audio, Visual Arts, Poster Design, and Digital Media, partly modeled on Badil's "Al-Awda Award."

In preparing the competition, the US Campaign solicited the support of activists and artists to help with the conceptual design of the competition, development of the website, the public launch and the ongoing publicity for the competition. This was particularly important since the wide exposure of the competition has been its primary educational tool. Seventeen jury members were also selected for the different creative categories, including renowned artists, filmmakers, writers, activists and intellectuals who generously agreed to help with the selection of the winning entries in each of the five categories.

The competition was launched on 30 January 2008, with a submission deadline set for 30 March 2008. Despite this very short window, the competition received an overwhelming response, whether through submissions, jury membership or feedback, from over 25 countries. Many of the submissions were from Palestinian refugee communities, as well as activists in the US and around the world – people already involved in the Palestine solidarity community. Several submissions, however, were from people who visited the website, learned about issue and decided to participate. When

Expressions of Nakba

the deadline arrived, we had received more than 350 entries in the five categories combined from 17 different countries spanning 4 continents.

For its organizers this competition was a great experience as it demonstrated the power of the arts and creative writing in education about Al-Nakba in the US, one of the most challenging scenes for the advocacy of Palestinian human and civil rights internationally. While the obstacles to advocacy for Palestinian rights in the US are numerous and multifaceted, the arts provide a new venue facilitating necessary discussions essential for advocacy.

After a long and deliberate jury process, the winning entries were selected, and the best entries in the five categories were exhibited in Washington DC and online on 15 May 2008. What follows are the winning written submissions.

First Prize Winner	
<p>First Prize Winners Badil's Al-Awda Award 2008 (Palestine)</p> <p>Category: Children's Literature Ahlam Mohammad Bisharat for the children's story "The Zinc Window"</p> <p>Category: Research Paper Muna Nabulsi for the study: "Developments in the Case of Palestinian Refugees in Iraq"</p> <p>Category: Nakba Commemoration Poster Ashraf Ghurayyib for the poster "Not for Sale" [see back cover]</p> <p>Category: Oral History Rasha Abu Zaitun for her research on the village of Sabbareen</p> <p>Category: Documentary Film Hesham Zuraiq for the film Abna' Eilaboun ("Sons of Eilaboun"); Mohammad Jabr for the film Lu'bat Yaffa ("The Yaffa Game")</p> <p>Category: Print Journalism Anas Abu Rahmah for the piece Al-Mithya' ("The Radio")</p>	<p>First Prize Winners Expressions of Nakba 2008 (USA)</p> <p>Category: Visual Arts Anne Paq for the photograph "Stronger than the Wall" [see page 103]</p> <p>Category: Digital Media Larissa Sansour for the video "Land Confiscation Order 06/24/T"</p> <p>Category: Poster Design Ildiko Toth for the poster "Parachutes Falling"</p> <p>Category: Recorded Audio Invincible and Abeer for the recording "People not Places"</p> <p>Category: Written Work Tala Abu Rahmeh for the poem "The Wrong Side of the Bridge" Maha Hararah for the short story "Safe Haven"</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>More on the Awda Award at: http://www.badil.org/awda-award More on Expressions of Nakba at: http://www.expressionsofnakba.org</p> </div>

The Wrong Side of the Bridge*

To my dad

By *Tala Abu Rahmeh*

To you sitting in the camp,
You dived head first into the fight
And I crossed home
Tip toeing around your blood

Beyond that dingy river,
Flies grow thin and spread
Less noise
Or maybe we become infested with love

I would tell you that at home
Sky opens up to contain
Your breath alongside your spit
But I'll push it under the rug for gentler times

Ramallah like every other city
Doesn't house tents
Here there are no temporaries
Our feet are planted between olive trees

At the camp,
Where children inherit an unfinished story
The streets are too narrow
To even hold your shadow

In Ramallah,
Children walk to school
On the wheel steps of April's tanks
Telling stories of uncles in jails

In the classroom,
Ancient Arabic poetry curls to flicker off
Bullets from the neighboring night
And the land that's theirs remains

The blackboard,
Doesn't dignify the checkpoint

There is so much to learn
Beyond glorified murder

And you,
Your face still scarred with loss
Repeat the names till they grow heavy on your tongue
Yaffa, Haifa, Akka, Falasteen

Abu Kbeer,
Where your mother gave birth to oranges
And your brother untangled the alphabets
Was stripped and raped and now lies still

I,
Don't think about it everyday
Instead I stroll to the vegetable market
And buy my own strawberries dressed in
a foreign language

Ramallah,
The city of chaos and bread
Houses my mother and old winter clothes
And protects me from worry

When I die, crushed with a missile or of old age
My body parts will rest between fresh daffodils
And all the kind things I would have done
Will become prayers in an overcrowded funeral

When you die, stained with sadness
You will not be buried in your grandparent's graveyard
Their bodies were excluded from the history
Wrapped by your faceless enemy

But I will remember you
Because you are
A piece
Of me

**Allenby Bridge is the bridge between Jordan and Palestine, a huge number of Palestinian refugees settled in Jordan after they were uprooted from their lands in 1948.*

ABOUT THIS PIECE: A poem about the parallel lives of a refugee and someone who lives at home in Palestine. The difference in the experience of the struggle is very apparent but the haunting history occupies the scent of both stories.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Tala Abu Rahmeh, was born in Amman, Jordan, then moved to Palestine in 1994. She graduated from Birzeit University with a degree in English Literature and is now pursuing her MFA in Creative Writing at the American University in Washington DC.

BACKGROUND IMAGE: Nihad Dukhan, Yaffa (Arabic Calligraphy) – Contestant: Visual-Arts category.

Best Youth Entry

Safe Haven

By Maha Hararah



A Palestinian Girl from Gaza waving the Palestinian flag, source: wafa.ps

Located in San Francisco, which is the home of the Giants, is AT&T Park, a great green field moderately flooded in a gush of white-uniformed baseball players gyrating in circles to get to home plate. In the vicinity of these players, like a vast blockade enclosing the flood, linger the colossal walls and the stands of the ballpark. Surrounding the field is a flood of men and women of every race and nation sitting high up in the stands and cheering ‘Let’s go Giants...!’ On Thursday, July 21, 2006, my family and I were getting ready to witness the San Francisco Giants smother the Los Angeles Dodgers. This baseball game was particularly important in that it was the game in which Barry Bonds was to hit another one of his milestone homeruns. Obviously, we were planning on having an amazing time indulging in a great American tradition.

Within the Gaza City walls, people quaked as the sounds of an Israeli siege began on July 13, 2006. The Palestinians heard the warlike sounds of Israeli tanks, helicopters, and guns. Missiles thundered over the civilian homes. Outside the walls, hundreds of green soldiers covered the hills. The Israeli Occupation Forces had carried numerous attacks on Gaza homes. On July 22, 2006, four family members from Gaza were killed and their home demolished. By July 26, 2006, thirty-one

Palestinian children had been killed in thirty-one days. As Israeli troops broke through parts of the city, desperately, Palestinians attempted to plug the breach. However, Gaza had fallen that day.

As I was eating the ballpark’s famous garlic fries, and waiting for Barry Bonds to hit a ball in my direction, I began pondering about my family’s love of baseball. Then it came to me; not the homerun Barry Bonds hit, but the reason why we love baseball. Baseball symbolizes many aspects of American life to my family. Such a concept is simply due to the fact that baseball is representative of the American dream. By American dream, I mean a few words that were uttered by a man a few years ago (more like 232 years ago). These few words lit a fire under the people of colonized America, a fire that allows Americans to enjoy the freedoms that we have today. These words are “Give me liberty or give me death!” Patrick Henry

uttered these words during a speech to the colonized on March 23, 1775. In fact, he was praised as a hero after exclaiming such zealous terms.

On Friday, July 22, 2006, at 5:50 a.m., a family in Gaza was preparing a rooftop breakfast, a summer tradition in Gaza. A disabled 25-year old was heating water for tea in a fire pit when he was suddenly engulfed by a huge flash of light. His nephew, a 20-year old, ran up the stairwell to see what pandemonium has just occurred on top of his home. He soon realized that his uncle's body was ripped to shreds by an Israeli shell. Two of his other nephews, ages 12 and 13, ran after their brother after hearing the shouts and blasts coming from the rooftop. Soon, another flash engulfed the two little boys. This flash was the second Israeli shell and two more people had been murdered at the hands of the Israeli forces. The children's mother was standing in the stairwell, near the remnants of the first shell, when she, too, was blasted by a shell. Her body was found lying on top of her sons' bodies.

At about 8:00 p.m. in San Francisco, my brother receives a frantic phone call from my mother, ordering us to go home. She did not give us a reason to go home, but just told us to go. We listened to her wishes and left the ballpark. We rushed home, only to find the house filled with sobbing relatives. Four of my cousins were just killed in Gaza. Palestinian officials say that they were targeted on account of living in a home higher than other homes, and that their home had overlooked the eastern border.

I found it ironic that when I was watching Barry Bonds run home, my family lost their home. However, during the entire trauma my family was going through, I only thought about Patrick Henry's aforementioned words and his sense of patriotism. I thought about the fact that his words reflect the Palestinian struggle. The "liberty" that Patrick Henry was referring to does not exist in Palestine. In fact, the Occupation has caused thousands of other Palestinian homes to be demolished since 1948, reducing the very freedoms that God has endowed on His servants.

I do regret going to that baseball game. However, I realize that I cannot tell the future and cannot possibly know that such a tragedy was to come. I also regret never teaching my cousins the game of baseball. I feel this way because baseball represents our passage through life. When the player leaves home plate, life begins, and thus, the player has to overcome any obstacles that come his way in order to get back to home plate. Home plate reminds me of home. By the term "home," I mean the peaceful aspect of having your own safe haven. I just hope that my cousins have found a new home in Heaven.

ABOUT THE PIECE: The piece I have submitted is a true narrative that happened in my life. My story represents all the traumatic events that all Palestinians faced because of the struggle. Everything I wrote in the story is real and happened in that order. I decided to write it the way it happened because I wanted to show everyone the way two stories, from different parts of the world, intersect. With this story, I represent how the Occupation has hit many families on a day-to-day basis.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: I, Maha Hararah, am a Palestinian Muslim living in the United States. I was born and raised in San Francisco, California. I speak Arabic and English; my parents believed that I needed to learn my language before I learned English, because it is who I am. This is why they taught me how to speak Arabic before they taught me English. I greatly appreciate their decision because an Arab is who I am, and who I need to represent. I am 18 years old and the youngest in my family, with three older brothers. My family is originally from Gaza. I visited Gaza only one time in the year 2000, right before the second Intifada.

Honorable Mention

Keep Hope Alive (an excerpt)

By Eileen Fleming

The wailing of families throughout Majd Al Krum could be heard for miles that cold night in October 1948. In single file, under the cover of darkness, Khaled, his sister, two cousins and hundreds of neighbors guided by only the light of a crescent moon trekked through the Galilee to Lebanon fearing for their lives, for the Israeli army had surrounded their village.

Twenty-one hours later they reached the town of Bint Jubayl and the family joined the end of a queue at a water well. The land owner offered them drink and hard crusts of bread and Khaled told him of their twenty-one hour odyssey of terror. Their host sighed and shrugged, then handed Khaled a blanket and pointed them down the grove where they could sleep amongst thousands of other Palestinian refugees. When they found an unoccupied olive tree they spread the blanket atop the dirt and roots and huddled together beneath the tree's broad canopy and fell into an exhausted sleep.

The next day, a mile from the grove, the young family found a vacant, unfurnished room in an unfinished building and sat down. For two days, they moved in a cloud of unknowing as more refugees flooded into Lebanon. On the third day Khaled announced, "We must move on. I say we go to Damascus. I have my teacher's certificate with me. I will teach the children of wealthy merchants, and we will eat and sleep without fear until we can return home."

He smiled, remembering the fierce joy of Khaldiyeh and Latifah when they erupted into song and dance, and Little Mo asked, "Why not?" It was their first laugh since leaving home.

The only transportation available was a decrepit old train that had once carried livestock. Hundreds of refugees were packed in like standing sardines and people relieved themselves and vomited all around the young family. After five hours, Khaled noticed the girls looked ready to pass out and announced that they must all jump off.

"I will count to twenty, and then we must all jump at the same time. Are you ready?"

The girls were visibly trembling, but nodded yes. Little Mo appeared stoic, but quaked within. Khaled counted slowly as they all stood at the edge of the open car holding hands. When Khaled screamed "twenty," he, Little Mo, and Latifah jumped, but not Khaldiyeh!

With astounding power Khaled ran after the train, climbed back aboard, grabbed his sister, picked her up, and jumped off once more. The siblings were scraped and bruised, but grateful to get off that wretched train. They all laughed for the second time since they had fled Majd Al Krum.

The young family walked the remaining mile to Beirut, where they spent the night wide awake in a bus depot, waiting for their ride to Damascus. They were filled with idealistic, youthful hopes, until their connection arrived, carrying thousands of dazed and confused Palestinians.

After disembarking from the long, silent ride, Khaled led his family into a dingy gray Damascus neighborhood. He was able to afford a few nights in a sparsely furnished attic room. On the third day, he ventured alone into the center of the cradle of civilization. The Damascus streets sights and smells overwhelmed Khaled's senses. His gait slowed to a shuffle as he inhaled and savored the pungent spices of meats and the sweet perfume of fresh fruits. He stopped at a booth displaying rugs and despaired at the thought of his family sleeping another night on a bare floor.

With a crooked smile the Syrian merchant inquired, “Which carpet is it that you desire?”

Khaled pointed to the thinnest scrap and asked “How much?”

“Only 125 Syrian liras. It is a bargain, and it is a fine eye you have for excellent quality. I see you are a smart young man, who will not pass up my gracious offer.”

Khaled was shocked into silence. The amount was five times more than he possessed. He turned to leave, as the rug merchant shouted, “How much can you spend? You cannot just walk away from me. What can you afford? You cannot treat me this way! You must answer me. How much can you spend?”

Khaled never had experienced such a verbal assault from any of the merchants in his hometown, and blurted out, “I have twenty-five Syrian liras.”

The rug merchant’s face clouded over with concern, and he asked, “Ah, young man, are you a refugee?” Khaled sighed and nodded sadly.

The merchant smiled broadly as he extended his palm to receive all that Khaled had and effusively expressed, “I am so very sorry for all of you refugees. My dear boy, I will lose a lot by accepting your offer. But I feel so sorry for you. I will suffer the loss to make a poor refugee happy.”

Khaled ran and danced his way home, proudly carrying the scrap of wool high above his head. The young family danced with joy on top of their new rug until a booming knock on their door startled them into silence. Khaled opened the door and in popped their landlady, “Just what is all the commotion about? I thought you were coming through the ceiling; you all made so much noise,” she complained.

Khaled proudly pointed to the rug and told of the excellent bargain he had made. The landlady stood upon the scrap and sniffed twice. She spoke through a smirk, “Oh, I have the same rug and paid only nineteen Syrian liras for it.”

.....One month after fleeing their comfortable home in Majd Al Krum the family traveled on bus and train for the two day journey to Khaled’s new job as a math teacher in the town of Hasaka, Syria.

The train was unheated, and the bus carried people, goats, sheep, and chickens that spilled out from all sides. They traveled on rocky dirt roads and saw only homes made of mud. By midnight, they arrived at the town of Hasaka and checked into the nearest hotel. Khaled was aghast when he opened his thin wallet and handed over the first night’s rent. They were now out of money.



Nidal Khairy, 60 Years of Nakba, Visual-Arts category contestant.

Their senses were assaulted by the damp, musky smell that permeated the tattered building on the way to their room furnished with only four thin mattresses on a wooden floor, a chipped table, a cracked water pitcher, and a naked light bulb set in an old wine bottle. The three fell asleep immediately, but Khaled remained wide awake engulfed by dark, tormenting thoughts of suicide and homicide in those last few hours before he reported to his first day on the job.

At three AM, the door shot open, and in charged two Syrian policemen. The girls screamed and the police accused them of prostitution. In fear and trembling, Khaled recounted the events of the past month as the police examined their papers and it was nearly dawn before the police were satisfied and left.

Khaled's dark mood turned more bitter with every step towards the school building on that frigid damp morning. He sighed and fumed as he waited for the Principal, Mr. Hamza to arrive. When he did, Khaled could barely mumble a greeting and followed the regal Kurd in a daze, to his classroom where Mr. Hamza introduced him to the students, waved and left.

Khaled looked into the eyes of thirty adolescent boys, picked up the math book and demanded to know just what they did and did not know. The bravest boy in the class blurted out indignantly, "What is your problem? We just want to learn, not fight with you."

Khaled retorted, "You all may be too stupid to learn anything, but I will try."

At the end of the school day, the students cut and ran from Khaled and descended upon Mr. Hamza's office demanding he fire the new math teacher. After hearing them out, Mr. Hamza found a trembling Khaled sitting in the darkened classroom and softly inquired, "What happened in here? Is it money? Do you need money?" Without waiting for a reply, Mr. Hamza opened his wallet, took out a month's worth of wages, and handed it to Khaled. "Now Khaled, go home, feed your family, and get some sleep. And make sure you report back to work tomorrow morning. Don't thank me, but help another whenever you can."

ABOUT THIS PIECE: Twenty-one year old Khaled Diab, his sister and two cousins fled for fear of their lives from their home in Majd Al Krum, which was surrounded by the Israeli army on a cold night in October 1948.

Khaled eventually made his way to the USA and had a lucrative career in the Defense Industry with Top Secret Clearance during the Cold War. The events of that day we call 9/11 led him to establish the non-profit Olive Trees Foundation for Peace dedicated to raising awareness and funds to replace the olive trees destroyed by The Wall.

This submission is an excerpt from "KEEP HOPE ALIVE," which is based on his memoirs. It was published by Outskirts Press in July 2007. It is a 100% fundraising vehicle for the 501 3-c Olive Trees Foundation for Peace, which is dedicated to raising funds to help replace the trees destroyed by The Wall. So far over 30,000 trees have been rooted in Israel Palestine on both sides of The Wall.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Eileen Fleming, Author "Keep Hope Alive" and "Memoirs of a Nice Irish American 'Girl's' Life in Occupied Territory." She is a reporter and editor WAWA: We Are Wide Awake (<http://www.wearewideawake.org>), Producer of "30 Minutes With Vanunu," and Secretary of the Florida Palestine Solidarity Network.

Writing the Olive Grove

by Deborah Rohan

I remember perfectly the day I met Hamzi Moghrabi. It was my birthday, June 9, 1993. He had offered to print copies of the newsletter I wrote for an NGO we both were involved with. When he entered the lobby where I waited, immediately his eyes fell to the novel I was holding entitled *The Hope*. It is a story about the birth of Israel. I had always loved reading books about Israel, beginning with *Exodus*. I felt enormous compassion and sorrow for Jews who first escaped Hitler's madness then fled to the land that would become Israel, and upon arriving in the Holy Land had to fight Arabs who didn't want them there. From my perspective it seemed patently unfair, and Jewish heroism intrigued and inspired me. I was not unlike other Americans in the 1990's.



The Moghrabi Family. Photo courtesy of Deborah Rohan.

All we "knew" about Arabs was that they were the bad guys, out to spoil everything that mattered to the Jewish people who simply wanted to live in peace and have a homeland that offered them safety. If only the story were as simple as my naiveté had me believe. On that day when I met Hamzi Moghrabi, I had no idea he was Palestinian; for despite my lifelong interest in the Holy Land, I had no idea who Palestinians were.

When Hamzi appeared in the waiting area, after noting the book but before he introduced himself, he said, "The worst problem in the Holy Land is that people dehumanize one another. If Israelis and Palestinians would only try to see and feel the other's humanity, everything would change." It was a viewpoint I would come to embrace, one that would change the course of my life in ways I couldn't imagine. Yet when I left him that day I went home immediately and tried to find Palestine on the map. Who were these Palestinians? Why weren't they ever mentioned in all the books I had read about the birth of Israel? Why could I only conjure up the word *terrorist* when I heard the word Palestinian?

I grew intrigued. In the next six months I read every book I could find about who Palestinians were, about the making of Israel, about Islam, about Judaism, and the origins of the conflict. I found references and history books in the library that told pieces of the story from a Palestinian perspective. Better versed, I called Hamzi and asked if he would have coffee with me and tell me about his family and why they left their land. Although surprised at my interest, he was eager to do so, and in the ensuing conversation I learned he was a Palestinian refugee who had brought his family from Beirut to Colorado for safety during the Lebanese civil war. An engineer and businessman who had found financial success, he regretted not becoming a medical doctor, which had been his dream. I was to learn how many dreams he had to surrender, chief among them the return to the home of his youth. A return to the olive groves that sustained his family for years.

As an American who had been exposed to the Jewish point of view throughout my entire lifetime, it was difficult, nearly impossible in fact, to truly "hear" Hamzi's version of history. Everything he told me about Palestinians and their history sounded untrue. Despite my newly acquired book knowledge that supported what he described, I continued to argue against his facts. He calmly and patiently told me he knew what happened in his own life. I remember him asking if I wanted to know

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if he was a terrorist. I nodded, braced for his answer. Sensing my fear, he began to laugh at the absurdity of the question. “I am many things,” he answered. “I am an engineer, I am a father, and a grandfather. I am a businessman. I am a Muslim. I am a Palestinian. I wanted to be doctors, to save lives, not take them. I believe in peace.”

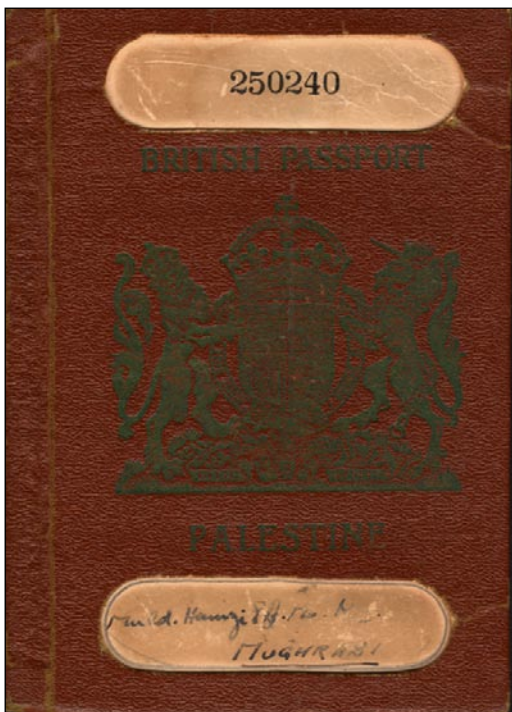
After several months my fear and distrust eventually melted away and I finally began to truly absorb his story. I wondered how it could be that someone like myself, someone who had read so much about the topic, had never heard the Palestinian story before. However the answer was simple—the story had never been told, at least not in the United States. Frustrated by this, I begged Hamzi to write a book that would tell the world what happened to his family, and by so doing, what happened to his people. He declined. “I am an engineer, not a writer. You are the one who should write this book.” And in that moment I knew he was right.

So began an unparalleled journey from my safe Catholic home in the suburbs of Denver into the dusty cobwebs of Middle Eastern history. Feeling the weight of responsibility for telling the story accurately, I delved deeply into the history of the Palestinian people, tracing their footsteps as best I could through the histories of the Ottoman Empire, both World Wars, the Balfour Declaration, and the Arab Revolt; I sought accurate descriptions of the Damascus army barracks in 1916; read about the Omayyad Mosque, learned the art of making olive oil soap as Hamzi’s family had done. I learned to make tabouleh and falafel and Arabic coffee, and found ways to add hummus to every possible meal.

I interviewed Hamzi and his siblings for hours on end; I visited his former home in Akka; spent nights in Palestinian homes in the cities and villages in the Galilee; then traveled to Beirut to meet Hamzi’s mother and sisters and nieces and nephews. I smoked the nargilleh in Beirut and wore Palestinian dresses. For some unknown period of time, I became a Palestinian. I fell in love with Palestinian culture; the generosity; the eloquence that abounds; the community, the walking visits from one home to the next, surprised to find yet more coffee, more cakes, more welcoming arms. I learned to play backgammon and card games. Had hundreds of conversation about “the situation” and listened to hundreds of family stories. I discovered in Palestinians a

sense of community I have found nowhere else. I wanted to stay; wanted to bask in the dream of Palestine that existed before 1948. I wanted to crawl inside the culture and taste the ten flavors of honey from the bees visiting ten different flowers; I wanted to bathe with soap made from olive oil; wanted to rise to the smell of *manaqeesh*. I wanted to turn back time; to undo the facts on the ground, to give back the essence of life Palestinians had lost. I yearned for the days when Jews and Muslims and Christians celebrated each other’s holidays in the Holy Land, when Muslims and Christians turned out lights on Shabbat for their Jewish neighbors; where Christians and Jews helped Muslims neighbors during difficult days of Ramadan; when Christians colored Easter eggs with the petals of flowers and vegetables they grew; where the pain of Sad Friday was shared by everyone.

It’s been fifteen years since I met Hamzi on my birthday in June of 1993, and my life has never been the same. Two days ago I returned from another visit to the Holy Land where I took 16 high school students—Muslims, Jews, and Christians— from Colorado to learn more about all sides of the conflict. I spent this birthday at Dheisha Refugee Camp, where students learned more about the ongoing pain Palestinian refugees endure. It’s been a long journey, and one I expect not to end soon, but educating as many people as I can to the challenges that Christians, Muslims and Jews all face in the Holy Land has become a mission I believe the entire world must learn and embrace.



Hamzi Moghrabi's mandate-era passport. Photo courtesy of Deborah Rohan

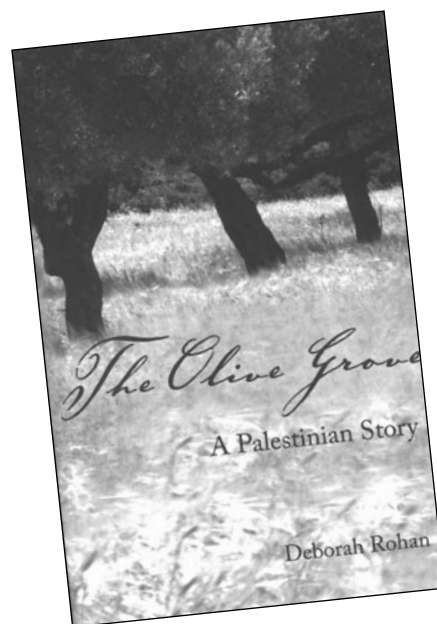
BOOK REVIEW

Deborah Rohan's *The Olive Grove*

Reviewed by Zaha Hassan

Much has been written of late about the deliberate and methodical expulsion and dispossession of most of the Palestinian population of Palestine after the UN recommended the partition of the country in 1947. Some writers have referred to what happened as “ethnic cleansing” while others point to the war crime of “population transfer.” Regardless of the label one places on it, what took place during the months and years after November 29, 1947 was, for Palestinians, a catastrophe—the Nakba.

While the efforts of the revisionist historians is long overdue and important in exposing the ugly under belly of the Zionist enterprise, their accounts of the Nakba are told from the vantage point of one looking back, outside the tragic events that took place, in the sanitized world of here and now. Moreover, though the histories cut against those of Israeli lore, they still are written through a Zionist lens: the history begins with the arrival of the first Zionists, and the Zionists are the actor-subjects while the indigenous Palestinian Arabs are the objects, the victims. The dearth of material exposing English-speaking audiences to a Palestinian-centered narrative and to insights into life in Palestine before there was a significant Zionist presence, and about how Palestinians managed to survive the Nakba really underscores the reason why it is difficult to humanize the Palestinian predicament in the West. Deborah Rohan's “The Olive Grove,” however, is a wonderful effort at making the Palestinian narrative accessible to English-speaking readers.



Published in London by Saqi Books, 2008

The Olive Grove is based on the real lives of the Moghrabis, a notable Acca family. The book is not so much a memoir as it is a captivating and beautiful story of love and how it sustains families in difficult times. The story opens with Hamzi Moghrabi's visit to Israel in 1998 with his daughter Ruba for the first time since his family was forced to flee fifty years earlier, in 1948. During the trip back to Acca, or Akko as it has come to be renamed by Israel, Hamzi finally tells his daughter about his father and the family's life in Palestine. With Ruba, the reader enters into the world of Ottoman Palestine in 1913 to meet her grandfather Kamel Moghrabi who was about to be conscripted into the Ottoman military for six years as was typical for Ottoman subjects entering at the rank of officer. We witness Kamel's farewell to his secret love, Majadah in a cut out of Acca's fortified limestone walls. There he breaks off their relationship and, in doing so, breaks her heart. In justifying what he has done, Kamel tells us through Rohan's elegant prose:

She would have waited for him, he thought. She'd said it clearly. Was it not worth enduring six years of loneliness to spend a lifetime with her? To raise children with her, to seek life's purpose with her? Particularly, so when she offers love that nears idolatry? He pondered that for a bit, eventually arriving at a defining revelation. From the beginning she raised me high on a pedestal, when I wanted nothing more than to stand beside her. Where I needed a partner, I found a devotee—blind to my shortcomings, unaware of my depths, and therefore unable to explore them.

As an officer in the Ottoman army, Kamel is accused of joining the Arab revolt against Ottoman rule and is sent to a prison in Haifa to await his trial which would usually result in a sentence of death. As he is left to his certain fate in a filthy and dark, underground Haifa prison, he is miraculously freed by the new lords of Palestine—the British occupying forces. Despite the military occupation of his country and the loss of family members to cholera that was affecting Palestine as it was elsewhere in the world, Kamel manages to live—and to live a good life—in Palestine. He marries the woman who would become the love of his life, Haniya, and he manages his family's thriving agricultural business, raising nine children along the way.



The Moghrabi Family. Photo courtesy of Deborah Rohan.



Haniya and Kamel Moghrabi. Photo courtesy of Deborah Rohan.

We learn about Kamel's relationships with the peasant farmers who work his land and share in its bounty, his Armenian Christian friend, Hagop, who loses his family to Ottoman genocide, his Jewish neighbors, Rabbi Mussa and Rachel, whose feelings about Zionism evolve with the emergence of Adolf Hitler, and about the Palestinian nationalist awakening that was accelerated by the British occupation and the influx of Jewish immigration to Palestine. These relationships between Kamel, his family, his friends, his neighbors and those sharecroppers who worked his land are carefully woven by Rohan's story and are set up against the backdrop of the historical events which upset, shake up, and appear aimed at destroying these relationships—and yet, not really. The penchant for Palestinian survival is too strong, even for events like the Nakba. Though Rohan does give an accounting of the Arab riots, the Zionist massacres, the 1948 war, and the expulsion from Palestine, she does not let these events overshadow and overtake the story she is telling, for the story she tells is not one about events, but one about lives.

Rohan's account of the Moghrabis in Palestine is not only rich with details of the lives of the members of the family, it does a beautiful job of painting a picture of Palestinian culture between 1913-1948. Some wonderful snapshots from the book include Kamel's first visit as a young man to the barber shop where the townsmen of Acca gathered to socialize, gossip, and drink coffee or sweet mint tea, Kamel's planting of a new olive orchard for each of his newborn sons according to tradition among the Palestinian gentry so that by the time the trees bear fruit in 16 years, his sons will be old enough to harvest the land and begin their own lives as men, and Kamel sitting in the coffee shop in Acca listening to the mukhtar read from the regional newspaper as was done since so many people at the time were illiterate. There are also some less than idyllic snapshots of life under British rule including images of surprise, middle of the night searches of Kamel's home by British soldiers, rousing his terrified children from their sleep, the burning of Kamel's crops by the British as collective punishment for the alleged participation of a sharecropper in the revolt against British occupation, and the horror of Kamel's family at seeing the 'x' on the back of Kamel's prison uniform as he returns to his cell after being paraded by British soldiers on the prison balcony—the "x" signifying a death sentence. What we get from these snapshots of Palestinian culture and life under British occupation is a window into a world that for too long has been clouded by the fog of the Nakba.

If Rohan is to be faulted at all for her depiction of Palestinian life before the Nakba, it would be for the fact that the picture she paints of Palestinian communal life—the relationships between landlords and laborers, Arabs and Jews, men and women, and Muslims and Christians—is almost too idyllic. Yet, if we remember that the story is being told by a father to his daughter as he remembers the beloved homeland he lost, then we understand that her depiction is in fact true to form. For in the hearts and minds of all those who have survived the Nakba, Palestine will always be that land of milk and honey, that young bride, full of the promise of love, or that terraced olive grove, trees heavy with fruit, waiting to be harvested.

There is no Alternative to the Return to Our Homes and Properties

Public Statement of the National Committee to Commemorate the Nakba at 60–Palestine

To the People of Palestine,

Whether you live within the ‘Green Line,’ in Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza, or in exile; you shall return, there is no doubt that you shall return.

Today the skies will echo as you state with one united voice: “There can be no alternative to our return,” all sounds will melt away as your voice rises to say “There can be no peace without our return to our original lands and homes.”

You who shall return, raise your voices and say “This is our land, this sky is our sky, this rock, tree, moon, and sea are our country, it will always be our Palestine.”

You who shall return, 60 years ago on this day was our Nakba, and today after sixty years we confirm, that we have never let the banner of return fall to the ground, and that the hour of return to our original homes and lands has come. Today we do not commemorate so we can weep over what was lost, we come together to march forward; to march home.

You who shall undoubtedly return,

It has been said that this was a land without a people for a people without a land; but what was the reality? Our people have inscribed their presence on the history of this land, deeply engraving their national identity as people struggling for liberty, dignity and freedom on every stone. Now these stones fly in the face of the oppressor’s lies that deny our existence and our rights.

It has been said that by dispersing us to the far corners of the earth, we will disappear or melt away; but what was the reality? A people with roots reaching far into the depths of Haifa, Akka, of Al-Majdal and Um Rashrash; a people whose history, civilization and culture has sprouted on every inch of this earth with the roots extending back to the land of Palestine.

It has been said that with the passage of time, our elderly will die and our youth will forget; but what was the reality? From the memory of our people have emerged generations that paint the history of Palestine, its villages, houses, its sage and its

Over 50,000 people attended the 15 May central demonstration in Ramallah’s Manara Square commemorating 60 years of Nakba and calling for the Right of Return. (Photo ©Badi)



oranges; a painting to which all compasses point, for despite the distances and directions that separate us, Palestine will always be the compass.

It has been said that we were deceived by a mendacious offer of peace, and rushed on our knees to reap its rewards; but what was the reality? A popular uprising, an Intifada that stood up in the name of truth to those who trusted their own treachery.

It was said that by caging us with their wall, and co-opting the world to besiege us, the strength of our hope would die away, and our voice with it; but what was the reality? They were suffocated by our chants, to the point where their leader said “Every time I hear of the right of return, I tremble afraid of what the future holds, I begin to doubt the reality of Israel’s establishment...”

Yes, you who shall undoubtedly return, your chants are the ones that force doubt into the minds of those celebrating their so-called independence. For their crimes of the Nakba still chase them, haunting them even after sixty years. What is the difference between the Ben-Gurion who had no fear for his newborn state except that the refugees may return, and the Olmert who trembles when he hears a reference to our right to return? It is the ghost of the victim, the pride of the first generation of refugees, both the living and the deceased, and the insistence of today’s generation that they will indeed return.

To our people across the globe,

Can we even count the number of political projects that aimed and attempted to strip us of our rights? Their names, sources and dates change, but all have experienced the same fate in history’s dustbin; a fate that shames the conspirators, and that proudly decorates you who refused to surrender. The main target of all of these projects was your right to return, whether through complete denial of the right, through attempts to resettle you elsewhere, or by finding those who would offer congratulations to the Jewishness of their state, or by attempting to recast your struggle as one seeking humanitarian charity, or by attempting to alter the meaning of your right as one to return to the West Bank or Gaza, or more recently, by equating your rights to those of the Jewish faith who came from other Arab lands to settle on yours.

Can a right be lost so long as its bearers continue to demand it? One thousand times we say: NO!! It is the wise saying of our ancestors that no right can be lost so long as the right-bearers fight for it. Your right exists so long as you and your land exist.

Yes, our right to return to our homeland is enshrined in international law, not least in UN General Assembly Resolution 194. However, this resolution brought nothing new to the law, it simply restated the most basic principles of law and morality: that any human being has a right to go home, and that any person forced to leave, has the right to reclaim all that was taken from her; and that the only way to extinguish these rights is for the refugee herself to choose not to return.

Those that expelled us can reject and conspire and deny, but we continue to remain steadfast and resist and resist and resist, and we will continue to resist until we return. For there is no right that is not granted without the sacrifices of struggle, and there is no oppressor that can continue to commit grave injustice for ever.

Our right is enshrined first by our existence, and second by this universe’s moral code, and third by law. As such there is nothing to fear from a wandering beggar knocking at the doors of the world’s governments, and there is nothing to fear from a Zionist leader consumed by the doubt of his state’s legitimacy, and there is nothing to fear from the violent stick of the United States’ empire nor from its carrot, for this right cannot be defeated by war, nor stolen by conspiracy.

Today, on the 60th anniversary of our Nakba, we do not come together to respond to the inane stupidities of this or that jester, nor to the projects that aim to resettle us or provide us with their charity; today on the 60th anniversary we come together to

announce a new beginning to our struggle, to announce that the march to the actual return and to real freedom has begun, and will not end until all of our rights, including our return, the restitution of our property, and the compensation for all that we have endured, have been implemented.

Today we reaffirm our rights, not least those articulated in UN General Assembly Resolution 194; we reaffirm our reclamation of our national unity and an end to internal division through open discussion, and we reaffirm our commitment to the project of reviving the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and the uniting framework of our people and our struggle. As such, it is imperative that we prioritize the following steps in relaunching our march along the road of return:

- To reflect the reality that the Nakba did not end in 1948, but has continued every day since then as Israel works to expand its control of our land and expel our people from it. As such we call for the adoption of the phrase “Ongoing Nakba”;
- That we refer to the Palestinians who managed to stay within the part of Palestine occupied in 1948 as the “Palestinians within the Green Line” or the “Palestinians in 1948 occupied Palestine” when referring to them, instead of phrases that deny them their Palestinian identity. Also to refer to “Historic Palestine” when referring to the Palestine's borders during the British mandate, as well as stressing that the right of return is to the refugees' “original homes and properties”;
- Consolidating and bolstering the culture of return through our society's formal, popular and civil institutions, and ensuring that this is disseminated consistently and as widely as possible through all means;



14 May 2008 demonstration in Beit Sahour (occupied West Bank) commemorating the Nakba and calling for the right of return. Photo courtesy of Alternative Information Center.

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- Considering a person or organization's stance on the right of return as the litmus test that determines our relationship with Israeli institutions and entities, and a measure for differentiating between projects as ones aimed at normalization or not;
- Strengthening the popular campaigns in Palestine, the Arab world and internationally, particularly the campaign for Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel, as well as the campaign for Academic and Cultural Boycott, and the campaign against the Israeli Apartheid Wall;
- Organizing an international campaign to push the United Nations to readopt its resolution recognizing Zionism as a form of racism;
- To stress in our work, language, and daily life the important distinction between Zionism and Judaism, and that Israel is a product of international Zionism that is nothing other than a colonial apartheid state;
- To be very clear that any political arrangement, including the 'two-state solution,' that does not include the full implementation of the rights of the refugees, is in no way a solution, and no more than an insulting and deceptive way of conflict-management.
- To ensure that the Palestinian narrative is properly documented, and included in all Palestinian educational curricula;
- Closely working with international movements that are in solidarity with our struggle to strengthen its place on the international agenda; and mobilizing Palestinian solidarity with the causes and struggles of oppressed people around the world, particularly the struggles of indigenous peoples for sovereignty and liberty.

You who shall undoubtedly return,

After sixty years of expulsion, exile and refuge; after sixty years of international impotence, and the failure of international organizations to enforce their own decisions; and after sixty years of Israeli arrogance, we declare that the commemoration of the Nakba as of today will be nothing but a date to renew our commitment to struggle until we achieve our return to our original homes and lands. We declare the return to be the program of our struggle, and not just a demand, and will continue as such until the end of the Nakba, "whether they like it or not" as Yasser Arafat once said.

We Shall Return Palestine 15 May 2008

"The Day of their Independence is the Day of our Nakba: March of Return" from Nazareth to depopulated town of Saffuriyya. 20,000 people participate in the march organized by internally displaced Palestinian citizens of Israel, 8 May 2008. One of the hundreds of Nakba-60 commemoration events across Palestine this year. © Badil.



We fought apartheid; we see no reason to celebrate it in Israel now!

Nakba-60 Statement from South African Anti-Apartheid Activists and Organizations

We, South Africans who faced the might of unjust and brutal Apartheid machinery in South Africa and fought against it with all our strength, with the objective to live in a just, democratic society, refuse today to celebrate the existence of an apartheid state in the Middle East. While Israel and its apologists around the world will, with pomp and ceremony, loudly proclaim the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the state of Israel this month, we who have lived with and struggled against oppression and colonialism will, instead, remember 6 decades of



Mandela in Palestine by Carlos Latuff

catastrophe for the Palestinian people. 60 years ago, 750,000 Palestinians were brutally expelled from their homeland, suffering persecution, massacres, and torture. They and their descendants remain refugees. This is no reason to celebrate.

WHEN we think of the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, **WE** also remember the Deir Yassin massacre of 1948. **WHEN** we think of South Africa's Bantustan policy, **WE** remember the bantustanisation of Palestine by the Israelis. **WHEN** we think of our heroes who languished on Robben Island and elsewhere, **WE** remember the 11,000 Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli jails. **WHEN** we think of the massive land theft perpetrated against the people of South Africa, **WE** remember that the theft of Palestinian land continues with the building of illegal Israeli settlements and the Apartheid Wall. **WHEN** we think of the Group Areas Act and other such apartheid legislation, **WE** remember that 93% of the land in Israel is reserved for Jewish use only. **WHEN** we think of Black people being systematically dispossessed in South Africa, **WE** remember that Israel uses ethnic and racial dispossession to strike at the heart of Palestinian life. **WHEN** we think of how the SADF troops persecuted our people in the townships, **WE** remember that attacks from tanks, fighter jets and helicopter gunships are the daily experience of Palestinians in the Occupied Territory. **WHEN** we think of the SADF attacks against our neighboring states, **WE** remember that Israel deliberately destabilizes the Middle East region and threatens international peace and security, including with its 100s of nuclear warheads. **WE** who have fought against Apartheid and vowed not to allow it to happen again can not allow Israel to continue perpetrating apartheid, colonialism and occupation against the indigenous people of Palestine. **WE** dare not allow Israel to continue violating international law with impunity. **WE** will not stand by while Israel continues to starve and bomb the people of Gaza. **WE** who fought all our lives for South Africa to be a state for all its people demand that millions of Palestinian refugees must be accorded the right to return to the homes from where they were expelled.

Documents, Reports and Reviews

Apartheid was a gross violation of human rights. It was so in South Africa and it is so with regard to Israel's persecution of the Palestinians!

Individual Endorsements:

- * Ronnie Kasrils, Minister of Intelligence / End Occupation Campaign
- * Blade Nzimande, General Secretary, South African Communist Party
- * Zwelinzima Vavi, General Secretary, Congress of South African Trade Unions
- * Ahmed Kathrada, former Robben Island prisoner
- * Eddie Makue, General Secretary, South African Council of Churches
- * Makoma Lekalaka, Social Movements Indaba
- * Dale McKinley, Anti-Privatisation Forum
- * Lybon Mabasa, President, Socialist Party of Azania
- * Costa Gazi, Pan Africanist Congress of Azania
- * Jeremy Cronin, South African Communist Party
- * Mosibudi Mangena, President, Azanian Peoples Organisation / Minister of Science and Technology
- * Pallo Jordan, Minister of Arts and Culture
- * Sydney Mufamadi, Minister of Provincial and Local Government
- * Mosioua Terror Lekota, Minister of Safety and Security
- * Alec Erwin, Minister of Public Enterprises
- * Essop Pahad, Minister in the Presidency
- * Enver Surty, Deputy Minister of Education
- * Roy Padayachee, Deputy Minister of Communications
- * Derek Hanekom, Deputy Minister of Science and Technology
- * Rob Davies, Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry
- * Lorretta Jacobus, Deputy Minister of Correctional Services
- * Sam Ramsamy, International Olympic Committee
- * Yasmin Sooka, Executive Director, Foundation for Human Rights / Former commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission
- * Pregs Govender, Feminist Activist and Author: Love and Courage, A Story of Insubordination
- * Adam Habib, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of Johannesburg
- * Enver Motala, Educationist
- * Frene Ginwala, African National Congress
- * Salim Vally, Palestine Solidarity Committee
- * Na'eem Jeenah, Palestine Solidarity Committee
- * Brian Ashley, Amandla Publications
- * Mercia Andrews, Palestine Solidarity Group
- * Andile Mngxitama, land rights activist
- * Ben Turok, Minister of Parliament
- * Patrick Bond, Centre for Civil Society, University of Kwazulu- Natal
- * Farid Esack, Professor of Contemporary Islam, Harvard University
- * Dennis Goldberg, former political prisoner
- * Elinor Sisulu, Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition
- * Andre Zaaiman
- * Virginia Setshedi, Coalition Against Water Privatisation
- * Max Ozinsky, Not in my Name
- * Revd Basil Manning, Minister, United Congregational Church of Southern Africa
- * Firoz Osman, Media Review Network
- * Zapiro, cartoonist
- * Mphutlane wa Bofelo, General Secretary, Muslim Youth Movement
- * Ighsaan Hendricks, President, Muslim Judicial Council
- * Iqbal Jassat, Media Review Network
- * Stiaan van der Merwe, Palestine Solidarity Committee
- * Naaziem Adam, Palestine Solidarity Alliance
- * Asha Moodley, Board member of Agenda feminist journal
- * Suraya Bibi Khan, Palestine Solidarity Alliance
- * Nazir Osman, Palestine Solidarity Alliance
- * Allan Horwitz, Jewish Voices
- * Jackie Dugard, legal and human rights activist
- * Professor Alan
- * Beata Lipman
- * Caroline O'Reilly, researcher
- * Jane Lipman
- * Shereen Mills, Human rights lawyer, Centre for Applied Legal Studies
- * Noor Nieftagodien, University of the Witwatersrand
- * Bobby Peek, groundwork, Friends of the Earth
- * Steven Friedman, academic
- * Arnold Tsunga, Chair, Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition
- * Mcebisi Skwatsha, Provincial Secretary, ANC Western Cape
- * Owen Manda, Centre for Sociological Research, University of Johannesburg
- * Claire Cerruti, Keep Left
- * Cassiem Khan
- * Duduzile Masango, Ecumenical Accompanier Programme, Palestine/Israel.
- * Syed Aftab Haider, Ahlul Bait Foundation of South Africa
- * Rassool Snyman, Palestine Support Committee
- * Suleman Dangor, University of Kwazulu Natal
- * Zaihoon Maziya, African Muslim Network
- * Asif Essop - Anti-Racism Education Forum
- * Patrick Mkhize, Steel Mining and Commercial Workers Union
- * Zeib Jeeva, Treasurer, International Development and Relief Foundation
- * Sheila Barsel, Not In My Name

Organisational Endorsements:

- * Al Quds Foundation
 - * Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF) and its 28 affiliates
 - * Anti-Racism Education Forum
 - * Azanian Peoples Organisation (Azapo)
 - * Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)
 - * Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition
 - * End Occupation Campaign
 - * groundWork, Friends of the Earth
 - * Media Review Network (MRN)
 - * Muslim Judicial Council (MJC)
 - * Muslim Youth Movement of South Africa (MYM)
 - * Not In My Name
 - * Palestine Solidarity Alliance
 - * Palestine Solidarity Committee
 - * Palestine Solidarity Group
 - * Palestine Support Committee
 - * Social Movements Indaba (SMI)
 - * Socialist Party of Azania (SOPA)
 - * South African Communist Party (SACP)
 - * South African Council of Churches (SACC)
 - * Workers Organization for Socialist Action (WOSA)
- NB:** Organizational affiliations above are for identification purposes only and do not necessarily reflect organizational endorsement.

Badil/COHRE Joint Statement on World Refugee Day, 20 June 2008

Accountability Must Replace Impunity for Acts of Forced Displacement in Israel/Palestine

On this World Refugee Day, BADIL and COHRE announce here the results of proceedings before the UN Human Rights Council Complaints Procedure, in which international justice has failed petitioners seeking due restitution of land, housing and property. In so doing, BADIL and COHRE reaffirm that accountability must replace impunity – also in the case of Israel and the Palestinian people, in particular Palestinian refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

In 2007, after extensive efforts to secure justice in Israel, persons representing dispossessed Palestinian persons and communities filed a petition under the confidential “1503” mechanism, providing a complaint procedure to the Human Rights Council. The petition concerned members of the Palestinian communities of (i) Kafr Bir'im, a village near the Lebanese border, forcibly removed from their land in 1948, and (ii) Arab as-Subeih, a Bedouin community in the Naqab/Negev whose land had been progressively seized by Israeli authorities over a number of decades. These acts of dispossession continue to today. At issue in the petition are circa 5000 persons. The petitioners were represented by a team of lawyers, BADIL and the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE).

On the eve of World Refugee Day, the petitioners learned that their appeal was no longer under consideration by the responsible working group of the UN human rights office (OHCHR). They were also informed that no reasons would be given for why their case was dropped, or why the very evident fundamental rights matters at issue would not be considered by the UN's premiere human rights body.

Palestinians forcibly removed from their land in 1948 are barred from return and restitution under Israeli law. They lack access to effective and adequate remedies via courts in Israel or elsewhere. On World Refugee Day, and while the UN celebrates the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the message conveyed to displaced and dispossessed Palestinians is that no one is accountable for the systematic violations their fundamental human rights by Israel.

In the case of Israel, the international community has failed for sixty years to recognize and respond to Israel's policy of forcibly transferring Palestinians from their land, barring return and restitution, and then developing such land for the exclusive benefit of the Jewish population. The consequences are ongoing forced displacement of Palestinians in Israel and the 1967 Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), more Jewish colonization of Palestinian land and the entrenchment of an apartheid-like regime over the Palestinian people, the lack of durable solutions and effective remedies for refugees and IDPs, and a growing population of displaced and stateless Palestinians.

On this World Refugee Day, approximately 70 percent of the Palestinian people are refugees and/or IDPs, including an estimated 115,000 IDPs generated since 1967 by Israel's colonization of the OPT. All of them commemorate in 2008 the 60th anniversary of the Palestinian Nakba (catastrophe), i.e. the ongoing forced displacement and dispossession of the Palestinian people and the destruction of their society and communities.

BADIL and COHRE deplore the failure of the UN human rights machinery to facilitate justice in the case of the petition concerning the dispossession of the inhabitants of Kafr Bir'im and Arab as-Subeih. BADIL and COHRE call upon civil society, governments and the United Nations to undertake any and all effective, legal measures to ensure that Palestinians finally enjoy effective restitution of property, housing and land, as is their right under international law.

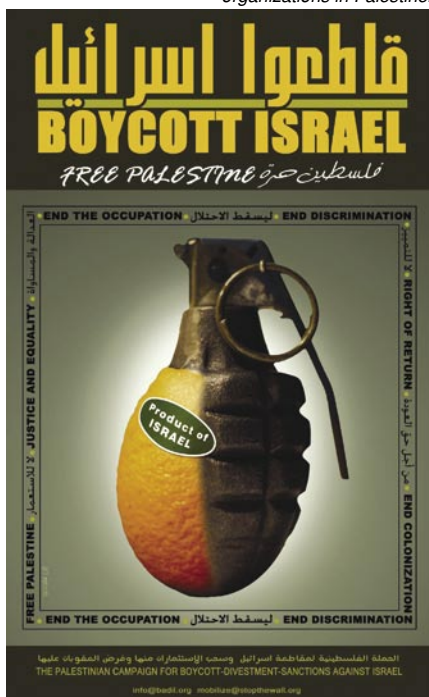
Further information on the “1503” procedure, which since 18 June 2007 is now the “Human Rights Council Complaints Procedure” is available at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/chr/complaints.htm>. Further information on the BADIL/COHRE Council Complaint is available at: <http://www.cohre.org/Israel>

BDS Update April-July 2008

Scottish PSC successfully campaign to cancel Israel flag raising ceremony

8 May 2008 - Zionists organizations in Scotland held an Israel at 60 celebration event in East Renfrewshire, Scotland. For three Saturdays running up to the event, the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign organized stalls in the area, which is also the location of the Israeli Information Office and KKL-JNF Scotland offices, and launched a popular campaign opposing the event. The Council bent under pressure from Scottish PSC and other pro-Palestine groups in Scotland such as Scottish Friends of Palestine and the Glasgow Palestine Human Rights Campaign, as well as individual constituents, and refused to allow the Israeli flag to run up the Council flagpole. The Provost of East Renfrewshire Council, Liberal Democrat Alex Mackie, however, allowed the celebration event to take place, and attended it. The Council denied they were financially supporting the event, however after the event The Jewish Chronicle reported that East Renfrewshire Council donated £500 to buy the celebration's fireworks.

BDS Campaign poster produced by BDS organizations in Palestine.



Protesters Disrupt Israeli Ambassador to Canada's Speech

9 April 2008 - Protesters successfully disrupted a lunch-in sponsored by the Quebec-Israel Committee, marking "60 years of relationship" between Canada and Israel. After effectively evading hotel security and the Montreal police, social justice activists burst into the appointed conference room, abruptly bringing to a halt the pro-apartheid discourse of Israel's ambassador to Canada. More at <http://tadamon.resist.ca>

Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) Vote to Join BDS Campaign

13-17 April 2008 – At its annual convention, CUPW became the first country-wide workers' union in North America to join the BDS campaign. Resolution 338/9 that passed with a very strong majority commits the union to "[s]upport the international campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions until Israel meets its obligation to recognize the Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination and fully complies with the precepts of international law including the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN resolution 194." CUPW played a very important role in supporting the boycott of the South African Apartheid regime, famously refusing to handle all mail going to or coming from the apartheid state.

Renowned Novelist Russel Banks Boycotts International Writers' Festival in Occupied Jerusalem

April 2008 – While having accepted the invitation to attend the festival, Banks realized that his presence would be an endorsement of Israel's racist policies that he had been an outspoken critic of in the past. An open letter to Banks from the British Committee for the Universities of Palestine (BRICUP) stated: "In March 2002 you were in Gaza City with the International Parliament of Writers, of which you were then president. You are reported to have told the Palestinians, 'You are not alone.' But you are about to take part in an event which is substantially funded by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This action will speak louder than any of the words you have previously spoken." The full BRICUP letter can be found at www.bricup.org.uk/documents/OpenLettertoRussellBanks.pdf

PACBI Slams Nadine Gordimer for Participation in International Writers' Festival during Israel-60 Celebrations

28 April 2008 – In an open letter penned by Omar Barghouti and Dr. Haidar Eid, the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic

and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) strongly criticized South African author Nadine Gordimer for ignoring calls to boycott the Israeli-hosted International Writers' Festival. The letter states "Imagine what your reaction would have been if a liberal international writer, of your stature, had accepted an invitation by some group of Afrikaner writers -- most of whom not opposing apartheid itself, but only supporting of a subset of rights for blacks under apartheid -- to a festival in apartheid South Africa that took no public position against the system of racial discrimination there... we are utterly disappointed and saddened by your insulting attempt to "balance" your act of complicity by promising to visit a Palestinian university or some venue in Ramallah! Was visiting a Bantustan ever a moral or rational excuse for participating in a largely pro-apartheid gathering in South Africa?" The full text of the letter can be seen at www.pacbi.org/letters_more.php?id=725_0_3_0_C

Opposition in Egypt attacks energy deal with Israel

Early May 2008 - Egyptian opposition parliamentarians publicly denounced an Egyptian-Israeli natural gas deal. The agreement, signed in 2005, calls for Egyptian natural-gas consortium EMG to supply Israel Electric with 1.7 billion cubic meters annually over a period of 15 years, with an option to increase the amount by 25 percent and to extend the length of the contract an additional five years. The deal is said to be worth \$2.5 billion. The first shipment of Egyptian natural-gas arrived on 1 May 2008, and the opposition parliamentarians held a special meeting to protest the deal on May 11. In the latest development, the Popular Campaign for Stopping the Export and Egyptian Natural Gas to Israel has sued the Mubarak government in an effort to raise public awareness about the agreement, and has launched a broader campaign that is to include a petition drive, mock trials of government officials as well as calls for religious leaders to condemn the sale of natural gas to Israel.

US Green Party Endorses Seattle Municipal Divestment Campaign

5 May 2008 - At its April general membership meeting, the Green Party of Seattle voted almost unanimously to endorse Seattle ballot initiative 97, titled "Seattle Divest from War and Occupation," which, if adopted by Seattle voters, would restrict the City of Seattle Employees' Retirement Fund from investing in companies that directly participate in, or directly profit from, the U.S. occupation of Iraq and corporations that provide material support for Israeli government activities, or do business within Israeli settlements, in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Thousands Protest Turin Bookfair Celebration of Israel

10 May 2008 – Over 8000 protesters took to the streets of Turin, Italy to express the popular outrage that the annual bookfair, one of Italy's premier cultural events, included a celebration of Israel at 60. The protest was a culmination of a series of mobilization and advocacy actions across Europe to drop the celebration of an apartheid state from the event; initiatives that brought about a boycott of the event by prominent authors such as Tariq Ali and Aharon Shabtai.

Intifada Association (Greece) Disrupt Israeli Ambassador Speech

14 May 2008 – The Intifada Association, a group of activists from student organizations and various political groups, interrupted Israel's Ambassador to Greece, Ali Yahya, as he spoke at a day-long conference on Greek-Israeli relations organized by the International Economic Relations Institute. The activists unfurled a banner that stated "Boycott Israeli apartheid" and chanted slogans against the occupation of the Palestinian territories and the strangulation of Gaza, before being attacked by private security guards.

American University of Cairo Senate calls for BDS

14 May 2008 - The American University in Cairo (AUC) decried occupation policies targeting Palestinian students and called for the university to adopt certain aspects of the BDS. The senate of the university stated that "...given the role of the Senate as a collective conscience of AUC, expressed in the many resolutions adopted over the years denouncing Israeli brutality and systematic racist policies against Palestinians and their basic rights, we [support] the growing voices of global civil society organizations, and prominent individuals, calling for various forms of boycott of Israel... [and call] for AUC faculty, staff, and

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students to refrain from dealings with Israeli Academia within the AUC environment, and consider divestment of the AUC endowment from all companies investing in Israel.”

Court Victory for Seattle Divestment Campaign

15 May 2008 - In the campaign to bring the divestment resolution (Bill I-97) to a vote by Seattle’s residents, campaigners must collect 17,968 signatures on a petition form. Zionist organizations took the campaigners to court charging that the forms were misleading. On 15 May, Washington Superior Court judge Steven Gonzalez refused to accept the biased language that the plaintiffs wished to insert into the petition form. Ballot Initiative 97, the *Seattle Divest from War and Occupation* campaign, is a citizen initiative to divest public monies from illegal war and occupation in Iraq and Palestine. I-97, if adopted, would require the Seattle Employees’ Retirement System to divest from any company that (1) participates directly in the occupation of Iraq; (2) is profiting from privatization of Iraqi state resources; (3) provides direct material support to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, and Golan Heights; and (4) has a direct presence in Israeli settlements in the occupied territories listed above. It would also require divestment from Israeli government bonds if Israel carries out a military attack on Iran without UN authorization. For more visit: www.divestfromwar.org

Leviev Campaign

Lev Leviev, one of Israel’s wealthiest businessmen, is building the Matityahu East settlement on the lands of the village of Bil’in with partner Shaya Boymelgreen, the Zufim settlement on the lands of the village of Jayyous, and the strategic West Bank settlements of Har Homa and Ma’ale Adumim around Jerusalem which divide the northern West Bank from the southern West Bank. In Bil’in and Jayyous, Boymelgreen and Leviev are building settlements on village land despite intensive nonviolent protest campaigns mounted by the two Palestinian villages against the construction.

Leviev, a major diamond trader who mines diamonds in Africa and polishes them in Israel, uses some of these profits to help finance his illegal settlement construction. Shaya Boymelgreen, until recently Leviev’s partner in real estate development in New York City and still his partner in building Matityahu East, has angered many community members in New York City with his abusive developments that he has become the target of local anti-gentrification campaigns.

One of the mothers against Lev Leviev’s support for Israeli apartheid. New York, 10 May 2008, photo courtesy of Adalah-NY.



Spearheaded by Adalah-New York: The Coalition for Justice in the Middle East, this campaign has been one of the most vibrant and successful in the past few months. Here are some of the recent highlights:

10 April 2008 - The **BNC issued a statement calling upon UNICEF to refrain from accepting any contributions from Mr. Lev Leviev**, Israeli diamond tycoon and developer of illegal Israeli settlements. The statement argued that “[j]ust as in the case of South African apartheid, the Palestinian BDS Campaign urges the UN and its leading organs to play a decisive role in imposing sanctions against Israel’s own version of apartheid. This is the only way left to enhance the chances for a just peace based on international law and universal human rights.”

10 May 2008 – During the run-up to Mother’s Day in the US, and in an initiative spearheaded by Adalah-NY, **over 100 women from around the world sign a call for Mother’s Day boycott of Leviev’s diamonds**, because his companies are destroying the lives of Palestinian mothers. Mother’s Day, on May 11, is the third biggest shopping period for jewelry in the US. Women gave out fliers on Saturday May 3 at Leviev’s Madison Avenue store, asking shoppers to honor the boycott call. The boycott letter included testimonies from Palestinian mothers Halima Husain from Jayyous and M’azuzza Abu Rahmeh from Bil’in, two West Bank villages where Leviev’s companies have recently built homes in expanding Israeli settlements on Palestinian land.

M’azuzza Abu Rahmeh from Bil’in explains, “*I hope that on this important day for mothers that no women in the world will have to live through this type of experience and that instead they will live with their families and homes, in security and peace.*” Halima Husain from Jayyous, adds, “*I hope that free people around the world will boycott*

\$2.3 billion arms deal between India and Israel derailed

Mid May 2008 – The Barak missile systems deal, potentially biggest deal between Israel and India, stalled as the corruption scandals surrounding the Israeli Aircraft Industry deals with India, and implicating an ex-navy commander and the defense minister, grew. BDS campaigners in India and their allies took up the issue in a joint press conference questioning the new deal with the Israeli military that would have provided Israel with a foothold in the air defense systems sector. The pressure led the Indian government to decide to put the project on hold “for political reasons.” The Israeli – Indian arms trade has come under heavy criticism from Indian political parties and civil society since the beginning of 2007 after the parties issued a call to completely cut Indian military ties with Israel at the height Israel’s siege on Gaza. While the current project has been halted, other military deals continue. Israel is still bidding for at least 18 different military projects with India, including a massive jet fighter deal.

Québec-wide Student Federation Joins BDS Campaign

May 2008 - L’Association pour une Solidarité Syndicale Étudiante (ASSÉ), an important Québec-wide student federation representing over 42,000 students, voted to support the international campaign against Israeli apartheid on a Québec-wide

Israel's occupation and will not support businesses of wealthy Israelis like Leviev who is building the settlement of Zufim, and that they will stand with us to lift this shadow and darkness that hangs over the Palestinian people.”

27 May 2008 - representatives from Adalah-NY and Jews Against the Occupation (JATO) met with representatives from the United Arab Emirates UN Mission. They presented the UAE representatives with a **letter from students from Jayyous calling on Dubai to boycott Israeli settlement-builder Lev Leviev**. Adalah-NY and JATO also gave the UAE representatives photos showing that Leviev’s jewelry is being advertised and sold by his Palestinian/Moroccan partner Arif Ben Khadra in Dubai. In their letter, the Jayyous students explained:

Leviev's money and investments are destroying the olive groves that have sustained our village for centuries. Many of our families are barred by the occupation forces from working our own lands that have been stolen by the Apartheid Wall for the 'Zufim' settlement. Mr. Leviev has heavily invested in this settlement and as such is funding the continuing dispossession of our people in Jayyous... Every Leviev diamond bought in Dubai pays for our oppression and dispossession. Give our proud village the chance to feed itself and grow again -- boycott Mr. Lev Leviev, in Dubai and all over the world.

23 June 2008 – **UNICEF announced that it has cut ties with diamond magnate Lev Leviev** on account of his involvement in settlement construction in Palestine, particularly on land belonging to the villages of Jayyous and Bil’in. The UNICEF decision comes after pressure on the agency from within Palestine as well as internationally. Previously, Leviev had attempted to deflect criticism by pointing to his charitable gifts to Oxfam. However, when contacted by Adalah-NY, Oxfam issued a public statement denying that it had received any contributions from Leviev and declared that it would refuse to take any in the future on account of his involvement with settlement construction.

2 July 2008 – **Seven diverse organizations call on Susan Sarandon to follow UNICEF’s lead and publicly cut ties with Lev Leviev**. The statement reads: “Like UNICEF, which did not know until we informed them, we understand that when you attended the November 13, 2007 gala opening of Leviev’s Madison Avenue jewelry store, as Adalah-NY protested outside, you were unaware of Leviev’s record of human rights abuses in Palestine, Angola and beyond. However, as a popular and respected human rights advocate and a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, not publicly severing ties with Leviev has sent and will continue to send a message to the world that you support Leviev’s highly unethical business activities which result in grave human rights abuses in Palestine.” The signatories included the West Bank Villages of Bil’in and Jayyous; Defence for Children International – Palestine Section; Steering Committee of the Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions National Committee; Jewish Voice for Peace (representing 23,000 Jews and allies who “yearn and work for a just peace for Palestinians and Israelis”); The Coalition of Women for Peace, Israel (representing ten Israeli women’s organizations).

3 July 2008 - The **Arab League announced that it is considering blacklisting companies belonging to Israeli businessman Lev Leviev** and that of his agent in the UAE, the pan-Arab body said just days after UNICEF severed ties with the billionaire jeweler.

For more information visit <http://adalahny.org>

level. The resolution was adopted after several local assemblies at university and Cégep campuses across the province voted at a local level within general student assemblies to support the boycott campaign. ASSÉ's boycott resolution marks the first time that a major student union in Québec or Canada has voted to support the international boycott campaign opposing Israeli apartheid and adopting the BDS campaign. For more information visit: <http://tadamon.resist.ca>

Dr. Uri Davis Puts Forward BDS Motion at Israeli Anthropological Society Annual Conference

21-22 May 2008 – Anthropologist and anti-apartheid activist Dr. Uri Davis presented a draft resolution calling for the Israeli Anthropological Society to endorse the BDS campaign at its 36th Annual Conference held at Beit Berl (Katznelson). The proposal specifically called for the society to “endorse the local, regional and international mobilization known as BDS, namely, boycott of Israeli industrial, cultural, academic and scientific institutions (including our own Association), divestment in Israel, and imposing UN sanctions against the rogue Government of the State of Israel. We support BDS as above until such time as the Government of the State of Israel implements the right of all 1948 Palestine refugees and their descendants to return and to the repossession of the titles to their properties inside the State of Israel, pointing out that our said endorsement refers to BDS against Israeli institutions – not individuals.” The draft resolution also called for the boycott of Israeli individuals who would not sign a statement clarifying their commitment to human rights, particularly the Palestinian refugees’ right to return, and recommended that the Association “call upon the relevant authorities of this campus to consider removing the name of the criminal apartheid political-Zionist ideologue Berl Kazenelson from this institution where we are convened and rename this academic college after the late Warsaw Ghetto survivor and human rights defender Professor Israel Shahak.”

Egyptian Diplomats Boycott Italian Football Tournament for Celebrating Israel

24 May 2008 – An Egyptian football team including Egyptian embassy workers in Rome quit an international tournament upon learning that they would be playing against an Israeli team which also included Israeli embassy workers. The Israeli team was explicitly formed as part of the Israel at 60 anniversary celebrations at the initiative of the Israeli ambassador in Italy.

UCU Votes in Favor of Considering Boycott

28 May 2008 - The motion committed the union to providing information on the occupation to members, drawn from the testimonies of UCU members who visited Palestine, and the Palestinian colleagues who recently visited the UK to tour campuses on the invitation of the UCU. It also resolved to initiate an international greylisting investigation into Ariel College which has been designated as a university and constitutes the educational arm of the colonization of the West Bank. The union will now have to pursue these issues through its normal procedures.

Jean-Luc Godard boycotts Israeli film festival

Late May 2008 - Swiss-French filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard canceled his participation in the Tel Aviv International Student Film Festival stating “circumstances beyond his control.” The cancellation came after the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) and others urged him to boycott the event. PACBI’s open letter to Godard, entitled “Le petit soldat dancing on Palestinian graves” - a reference to Godard’s 1963 film, urged Godard to “take a courageous stand and cancel your trip to Israel... Did you ever go to an Afrikaner film festival in apartheid South Africa? Why Israel, then?”

Bahrainis Push for Reopening Israel Boycott Office

Late May 2008 – The Bahrain Society against Normalization with the Zionist Enemy began collecting petitions to reopen the Israel Boycott office in their country. The office was opened in 1963 to monitor goods coming into the country with the aim of keeping out Israeli products, and was shut down in 2004 when the Bahraini government signed a free trade agreement with the US that stipulated the closing down of the office – a pattern that has been repeated in several Arab states. This petition comes as the parliament awaits the government’s response for a parliamentary bill calling for the reopening of the boycott office.

British Rugby Fans Call for a Cancellation of their Team's Caterpillar Sponsorship

30 May 2008 - Caterpillar and the Leicester Tigers announced a five-year multi-million pound sponsorship deal, believed to be the biggest in rugby history. Activists from the UK's Palestine Solidarity Campaign joined the fans of the team in publicly challenging the deal, arousing a controversy in local media that highlighted Caterpillar's role in supplying the Israeli military with machinery used in the violation of Palestinian human rights

COSATU condemns alleged awarding of tender to an Israeli company

6 June 2008 - Orsus Solutions Israel Ltd. was awarded a contract estimated at more than \$5 million to work with Transnet Freight Rail, an international rail operator based in South Africa. Upon learning about this deal, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) immediately issued a public statement condemning the transaction. In the statement, the Congress argues that: "we need to take drastic action to disrupt this transaction, which is an attack on the noble struggle of the oppressed Palestinian people... We call on the world community of progressive peoples to do all within their power to mobilize for intensified action and the isolation of Israel at all levels. We are also aware that Israel supported with arms and helped the brutal Apartheid regime to murder and kill political activists on our own soil, so we have reason to share in the pains and suffering of the Palestinian people at this hour of need... South Africa must send the Israeli ambassador in our country back home. In this way, we shall be giving a practical signal of solidarity with our comrades in the occupied territories. The time has come and we must act and act now."

BDS Activists in Vancouver (Canada) Picket Sales of Israeli Wines

7 June 2008 - Local activists gathered for a spirited picket on June 7 in front of the BC Liquor Store on one of the busiest streets in the city to protest the distribution of wines under the Israeli label. The picket was full of diverse touches, including a bagpiper, homemade cookies for picketers and the participation of visiting Jewish American singer David Rovics. The picket itself reflected the broad support the campaign has received so far, with activists from many sectors (Palestinian support groups, progressive Jewish groups, war resisters) joining in to say that "Vancouver does not want to Drink with Apartheid." An aggressive attempt at harassing the picket by Zionist fanatics (some of whom were openly racist) failed and actually motivated many of the picketers to rededicate their commitment to the campaign, which is already planning future activities. The BC Liquor Board has introduced three brands of Israeli wines, two of which are already confirmed to be directly from the spoils of Israeli occupation on Arab land, in this case the occupied Golan Heights. The campaign is also asking people in Canada to consider joining the global BDS movement, which is the most effective non-violent means of bringing pressure on the Israeli government as it continues to flout all international norms.

Derry Anti-War Activists Acquitted

11 June 2008 – The nine Irish activists - who occupied and closed down Raytheon offices at Springtown in Derry in a 9 August 2007 protest organized by the Derry Anti-War Coalition - were found 'not-guilty' by a unanimous Jury. The nine were charged under the Terrorism Act, which means that they could have faced lengthy jail sentences. Protests have been carried out in Derry since their arrests. Raytheon plays a key role in arming the Israeli military. Guided bombs produced by Raytheon were used to hit the city of Qana, resulting in one of the worst massacres of the Summer 2006 Israeli aggression against Lebanon. Raytheon also produces a number of different types of missiles, all of which are used against the Palestinian population, these days most frequently in Gaza. Addressing the crowd outside the courtroom after their release, the activists stated "We remain proud of the action we took and only wish that we could have done more to disrupt the 'kill chain' that Raytheon controls." For more information visit www.raytheon9.org

Activists Picket and Disrupt Caterpillar Annual Shareholders Meeting

11 June 2008 - More than 50 Palestine solidarity activists from numerous organizations gathered to oppose Caterpillar Corporation's annual shareholders meeting. Caterpillar, an American company, is responsible for building and outfitting militarized bulldozers to sell to the Israeli army. Three activists with the International Solidarity Movement's Chicago chapter

were able to get inside the meeting, making statements about the use of Caterpillar trucks in home demolition and ending their statements by chanting, “take responsibility and do the right thing!” as they were quickly surrounded and ejected from the meeting by security guards. Caterpillar Corporation will continue to be targeted for its support for the occupation and apartheid in Palestine until it agrees to end sales to the Israeli military.

British Committee for the Universities of Palestine (BRICUP) Send Open Letter to Branford Marsalis

17 June 2008 – BRICUP responded to information that African American Jazz great, Branford Marsalis, had accepted an invitation to perform in Israel in violation of the Boycott by issuing an open letter. The letter stated: “jazz is one of the most triumphant expressions of African-Americans’ resistance to forced removal, ruthless suppression, and murderous racism. Yet you are reportedly going to play a concert in a country whose government and army are even now inflicting similar cruelties on another people. Is it possible that when you agreed to play in Tel Aviv on July 17, you did not think what message this would send to the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine, many of whom now live in refugee camps outside their homeland or in exile across the world? They were driven out *en masse* in 1948 and 1967, and no Israeli government has ever allowed them, their children, or their children’s children, to return... If you stand up on that stage in the Tel Aviv opera house you’ll be telling the Palestinians their suffering -- the product of colonialism and racism-- doesn’t matter... Please don’t go.” The full text of the letter can be seen at <http://www.bricup.co.uk>

ICTU Launches Senior Labor Delegation to Palestine Report

18 June 2008 – The Irish Congress of Trade Unions formally launched the report of a senior union delegation visit to Israel and Palestine which recommends support and promotion for a “boycott campaign of Israeli goods and services and a policy of disinvestment from Israeli companies” in order to encourage Israeli compliance with International Law and to cease its violation of the human rights of the Palestinian people. The report also calls for the Irish government to initiate change at the EU level, with regard to policy on Israel and Palestine. The November 2007 delegation visit, which comprised senior Congress officials and was led by the current President of Congress, followed the unanimous adoption by Congress, in July 2007, of two motions that specifically called for a boycott and a campaign of disinvestment. The full report is available at www.ictu.ie/download/pdf/palestine_final.pdf

Pressure on Veolia continues, Civic Coalition to Defend Jerusalem Launches Corporate Blacklist

June 2008 - Following the decision by SNS Bank’s subsidiary ANS to divest from Veolia, activists approached SNS bank itself. This month, SNS has agreed that “the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory is not consistent with international law” but that “the bank does not consider the construction of the tramway as a direct, grave violation of human rights.” However, SNS has not yet ruled out divestment, which will depend on the future actions of Veolia. It has also been reported that Polar Investments, the largest stakeholder in the Jerusalem light rail, is planning to sell its shares in the project. This is on account of Polar’s wish to focus on real estate as well as the problems that have plagued the construction of the rail system. According to Globes, the other shareholders are Ashtröm Properites Ltd. (27.5%), Harel Insurance Investments and Financial Services Ltd. (20%), Alstom SA (20%), and Veolia unit Connex (5%). In Palestine, the Civic Coalition to Defend Palestinian Rights in Jerusalem has launched the “Stop the Expulsion” campaign. The aim of the campaign is to uphold Palestinian residency rights in Jerusalem, which have been trampled by the occupation authorities. One goal of the campaign is to pressure international corporations and governments that are actively supporting the occupation and colonization of the Palestinian capital, partly through maintaining a blacklist of complicit corporations. Veolia is the first company to be blacklisted by the campaign for its involvement in the construction of the light rail system. More information at: www.ccdprj.ps/stopexpulsion

UK’s Largest Public Sector Union Passes Boycott Resolution

22 June 2008 – Delegates at the 2008 UNISON Delegate Conference adopted a comprehensive policy on Palestine building

on discussions and decisions made over the conferences held since 2005. Conference noted that 2008 marks the sixtieth anniversary of the “Nakba” which led to nearly 900,000 Palestinian refugees fleeing their homes. Many of them and their descendants still live in refugee camps and all are unable to return to their homes. Building on the Trades Union Congress 2006 adoption of a clear position in support of self-determination for the Palestinian people, Conference instructed the union’s National Executive Council to, among other acts of solidarity and movement building, “[examine] the investments of their members’ pension funds with a view to calling for disinvestment from companies such as Caterpillar, involved in the occupation, ... campaign to bring about a concrete change in the policies of the British government and the European Union, [particularly to work towards] an end to the arms trade between Israel and Britain and EU Member States leading to a mandatory United Nations Arms Embargo; suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement until Israel is in full compliance of its human rights clauses; a ban on imports of all goods, and especially agricultural produce, from the illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories,” and also committed the union to “[e]nsure that the union divests itself of any holdings in companies responsible for maintaining the illegal Wall condemned by the International Court of Justice.”

PCHR Files Lawsuit against Israeli Military over Shehada Assassination

24 June 2008 - the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) filed a lawsuit at the National Court of Spain, the highest Spanish judicial council, against seven former senior Israeli military officials involved in the planning and execution of the “targeted assassination” of Salah Shehada. The July 2002 assassination of the Hamas commander in Gaza city involved the dropping of a 500kg bomb on his house killing him and seventeen others, including his wife, his daughter, his guard, eight children (including a 2-month infant), two elderly men, and two women. In addition, seventy-seven other people were injured, eleven houses were completely destroyed and thirty-two houses damaged. As an immediate response, the Occupation has ordered all the military officers implicated in the case not to enter Spain to avoid arrest and prosecution. More information at: www.pchrgaza.org

Israeli Ambassador Meeting with Welsh National Assembly Sparks Boycotts and Protests

25 June 2008 – The first Muslim member of the Welsh National Assembly, Mohammad Asghar, invited Ron Prosor, the Israeli Ambassador to the UK, to meet with the Assembly. The initial response to the meeting was the declaration of the Speaker of the Assembly, Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas, that he was “unwilling to accept the invitation to meet the ambassador, because of my objection to the failure of the State of Israel to meet its international obligations to the Palestinian people of the Holy Lands,” and inviting other Assembly Members to do the same. The June 25 meeting also met with grassroots protests from BDS activists in Wales, three of the protesters were arrested by South Wales police. Read the BNC statement of support for Lord Elis-Thomas at: www.bdsmovement.net/?q=node/153

Anti-Normalization Campaign in Jordan Challenges Film Festival

28 June 2008 – The campaign in the Hashemite Kingdom initially called for an artists’ boycott of the Jordan Festival due to a perception that the French company ‘Publicis’ was contracted to organize the advertisements for the festival. The same company was responsible for publicity of the Israel at 60 celebrations. High profile Arab artists, including Omar al-Abdullat, Amr Diab, and Mohammad Hamaqi stated their non-participation. 3 July 2008 – The Jordan Artists Association (JAA) dropped its reservations over the Jordan Festival, giving the green light to Arab artists who had intended to boycott the event to change their mind. Shaher al-Hadid, President of the JAA stated that “[a]fter all ambiguities regarding the organizing firm were removed by His Majesty the King, we invite our Arab colleagues to go ahead with their plans to perform concerts.” The state-run Jordanian Tourist Board has categorically rejected that Publicis Groupe was involved in the organization of the festival, but the denial had failed to convince the JAA to change its stand. The reversal of the JAA’s attitude came after remarks by King Abdullah II aimed at the event’s “ignorant skeptics” stating they were following unfounded rumors.”

Over 100 European Organizations Join BNC in Calling for Suspension of EU-Israel Association Agreement

9 July 2008 - Statement:

"We oppose the upgrade of relations between EU and Israel and call for the suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement"

On Monday, 16 June 2008, the European Union and Israel agreed to upgrade their relations within the framework of the EU-Israel Association Agreement. This starts a process to end in April 2009 with the definition of a common Action Plan that involves the adoption of initiatives and the creation of stronger ties in a broad spectrum, including economic, trade, academic, security and diplomatic fields.

We are app
In their decision the EU declare:

"Our common goal to upgrade relations stems from our awareness of the traditional links, the cultural and human values, and the economic and security interests that we share. [...] Such a partnership will imply a stronger involvement of the European Union in the peace process and in the monitoring of the situation on the ground."

This contradicts reality, the EU's self-understanding, and Israel's record of gravely violating the EU's own human rights regulations throughout the history of EU-Israel relations.

What shared values is the EU talking about? The EU is well aware of Israel's ongoing violations of international human rights and humanitarian law in Gaza and the West Bank, including the massive colonization in East Jerusalem and elsewhere. After all, the EU member-states have regularly voted for UN resolutions condemning Israel's human rights violations, collective punishment and construction of settlements and the Wall. Israel still maintains its criminal one-year-long siege on Gaza – described by the current UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights, Prof. Richard Falk as a "prelude to genocide" – that has already cost the lives of 197 patients, mainly children and elderly, all denied freedom of movement to access treatment outside Gaza. Israel's siege has intentionally and systematically impoverished hundreds of thousands of civilians in Gaza, more than 50% by now, shutting down most of the industrial sector and ruining agriculture. Most vital infrastructure has been destroyed and the economy has completely collapsed; malnourishment among children has increased sharply, as noted in various UN reports. Israel has continuously disregarded basic human rights by the enclosure and forced displacement of entire Palestinian communities behind the illegal Wall, the imprisonment of thousands of Palestinians without trial, and its policy of extra-judicial assassination. Furthermore, Israel has stubbornly refused, for over 60 years and despite its obligations under international law, to recognize and implement the right of millions of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes, as stipulated in UNGA resolution 194. Last, but certainly not least, for 60 years, Israel has enacted a system of state-sanctioned racial discrimination against Palestinians with Israeli citizenship in vital domains, including land ownership and employment, simply because they are "non-Jews." We hope Europe does not share these "values."

Legal and moral considerations aside, pragmatic claims that further engagement with Israel allows Europe to play a more effective role in pressuring Israel and promoting "peace," are dangerously similar to the 'constructive engagement' arguments made to justify relations with the South African Apartheid regime, and have long been exposed as fallacious. The only time Europe went on record for having effectively influenced Israeli policy goes back to 1990 when the Commission had, at Parliament's request, introduced a freeze on scientific cooperation with Israel to protest against the closure of Palestinian schools and universities (particularly Birzeit). This pressure had resulted in the universities being reopened. Since then, Europe's warm embrace of Israel h

On 10 April 2002, the EU Parliament voted to suspend the EU-Israel Association Agreement on the grounds of Israeli violations of human rights; however, the Commission refused to comply with the democratic mandate. Instead, it has voted now to upgrade relations without respecting its own stated human rights conditions, effectively rewarding Israel and granting it full impunity for its war crimes in the occupied Gaza Strip and West Bank. By upgrading this already shameful Asso

In this context the establishment of a full fledged Subcommittee on Human Rights instead of the informal Working Group as part of the agreement is reduced to a fig leaf for the ongoing disrespect of the EU's own principles as pertaining to Israel.

Article 2 of the EU-Israel Association Agreement establishes that:

"Relations between the parties, as well as all the provisions of the Agreement itself, shall be based on a respect for human rights and democratic principles, which guides their internal policy and constitutes an essential element of this Agreement."

The Communication on human rights, adopted on 8 May 2001 by the European Commission, states that:

"The EU should pursue this approach [e.g. dialogue on human rights] wherever possible, while recognizing that in some cases, the third country may have no genuine commitment to pursue change through dialogue and consultation, and negative measures may therefore be more appropriate."

The International Court of Justice advisory opinion on 9 July 2004 confirming the illegality of the Wall built on occupied territory and its associated regime further binds all states not to render aid or assistance in maintaining the illegal situation created by the Wall, and to ensure compliance by Israel with international law.

None of the above has been taken into consideration by the EU Commission. Instead, it proceeds with an upgrade in relations in the very year that marks the 60th anniversary of the 1948 Nakba, now widely recognized as the intentional and systematic ethnic cleansing of more than 750,000 indigenous Palestinians from

A growing international civil society movement that has endorsed the Palestinian call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel is taking the first steps to hold Israel accountable and to pressure governments to enact sanctions and embargos.

In this spirit, we commit ourselves to raise awareness among the public and lobby and pressure EU decision makers to stop the process of upgrading the agreement on

1. Ending its 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, protect

April 2009 sho

Initiator:

Palestinian Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions National Committee (BNC).

Further Endorsers from Palestine:

1. Alternative Information Center
2. Arab Cultural Forum
3. Birzeit University Board of Trustees
4. Dalia Association
5. Democracy and Workers' Rights Center in Palestine
6. Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions
7. One Democratic State Group-Gaza
8. University Teachers Association in Palestine

European Endorsers:

1. ACSUR- Las SEGOVIAS, Spain
2. AG Palästina / Attac-Hamburg, Germany
3. AIPPP (préservation patrimoine palestinien), France
4. AK Nahost Berlin, Germany
5. Aktionsbündnis für einen gerechten Frieden in Palästina, Germany
6. Al Awda, Italy
7. Anti-imperialist Camp
8. Arab Cause Solidarity Committee, Spain
9. Arbeitskreis Palästina Tübingen, Germany
10. Association "100 idee per la pace", Siena, Italy
11. Association belgo-palestinienne, Belgium
12. Association of Palestinian Communities, UK
13. Associazione di Amicizia Italo-Palestinese Onlus di Firenze, Italy
14. Austrian Campaign "Gaza muss leben", Austria
15. Britain Palestine Twinning Network, UK
16. CCIPPP, France
17. Civimed Initiatives (formation à médiation), France
18. CODIP vzw (Centre for Development, Documentation and Information Palestine), Belgium
19. Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado (CEAR), Spain
20. Comité de Soutien au peuple Palestinien, Belgium
21. Comité pour une Paix Juste au Proche Orient-Luxembourg
22. Coordination de l'Appel de Strasbourg, France
23. European Jews for a Just Peace
24. Farrah-France (réfugiés), France
25. Federación de Asociaciones de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos, Spain
26. Fiom-Cgil International Department, Italy
27. Frauen in Schwarz (Wien) - Women in Black, Austria
28. Friends of Al-Aqsa, UK
29. Fundación Iepala, Spain
30. Gaza Vivrà, Italy
31. German Peace Circle e.V. i.G., Germany
32. German-Palestinian Association, Germany
33. Handicap-Solidarité, France
34. Hands Across the Divide, Cyprus

35. Hoja de Ruta, Spain
36. Intal, Belgium
37. International Jewish Solidarity Network
38. International Solidarity movement (ISM)
39. Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Ireland
40. Juedische Stimme für gerechten Frieden in Nahost - EJJJ Germany
41. Jewish Voice for a Just Peace in the Middle East - EJJJ Austria
42. Jews Against Zionism
43. Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights
44. Leuvense Actiegroep Palestina (LAP)
45. LSE SU Palestine Society, UK
46. L'union des Progressistes Juifs de Belgique
47. Nahostkomitee in der Berliner Friedenskoordination, Berlin Germany
48. NEAG Alternatives to Violence, Netherlands
49. Netherlands Palestine Committee
50. Oekumenisches Zentrum für Umwelt-, Friedens- und Eine-Welt-Arbeit, Peace and One-World-Work, Berlin, Germany
51. Palestina Komitee Rotterdam, Netherlands
52. Palestine Think Tank
53. Palestinian Forum in Britain (PFB), UK
54. Pax Christi Middle East Commission German Section
55. Plataforma Aturem la Guerra, Catalunya
56. Palestine Solidarity Campaign, UK
57. Red internacionalista de jóvenes vascxs Kamaradak-Kamaradak Gazte Internazionalisten Sarea, Basque Country
58. Red Solidaria contra la Ocupación de Palestina - Solidarity Network against Occupation of Palestine (24 Organizations in Spain):
 1. *Asociación Al-Quds de Solidaridad con los Pueblos del Mundo Árabe (Málaga)*
 2. *ASPA Asociación Andaluza por la Solidaridad y Paz*
 3. *Asociación Hispano Palestina Jerusalén (Madrid)*
 4. *Asociación Pro-Derechos Humanos de Andalucía*
 5. *Boicot Preventiu*
 6. *CSCA (Madrid, Asturias)*
 7. *Comunidad Palestina en Canarias*
 8. *Comunitat Palestina Catalunya*
 9. *Ecologistas en Acción*
 10. *Grupo de ONGs por Palestina*
 11. *INTERPUEBLOS - Comité de Solidaridad con los Pueblos*
 12. *ISM Cataluña / Valencia*
 13. *MEWANDO (Euzkadi) - (Middle East without war and oppression) is a network created by six NGO's and supported by the Basque Government. MEWANDO members are: Mundubat; Solidaridad Internazional-*

- Nazioarteko Elkartasuna; Médicos del Mundo-Euskadi, Fundación Paz y Solidaridad-Comisiones Obreras de Euskadi, Coordinadora de ONG's de Euskadi, Centro Cultural Palestino Biladi, Paz con Dignidad Euskadi.*
14. *Mujeres por la Paz - Acción solidaria con Palestina (Canarias)*
 15. *PCE (Madrid)*
 16. *Palestinarekin Elkartasuna komite Internazionalistak (Euzkadi)*
 17. *Paz Ahora*
 18. *Paz con Dignidad*
 19. *Plataforma de Solidaridad con Palestina (Sevilla)*
 20. *SODEPAU*
 21. *SODEPAZ*
 22. *Xarxa de Solidaritat amb Palestina de Valencia*
 23. *Xarxa d'Enllaç amb Palestina*
 24. *Komite Internazionalistak (Euzkadi)*
 59. Rete-ECO (Rete degli Ebrei contro l'Occupazione, Italy)
 60. Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Scotland
 61. Society for Austro-Arab Relations, Austria
 62. Stichting Palestina (Palestine Foundation)
 63. Stop the War Coalition, UK
 64. Tlaxcala Translators Collective
 65. Un ponte per..., Italy
 66. Une Autre Gauche, Belgium
 67. Verein Arabischer Studenten und Akademiker Tübingen, Germany
 68. Vlaams Palestina Komitee vzw, Belgium
 69. Vrede vzw, Belgium
 70. War on Want, UK
 71. WeAreWideAwake.org
 72. Werkgroep Keerpunt (Taskgroup Turningpoint), Netherlands
 73. Women for Peace Uppsala, Sweden
 74. Women in Black, Austria
 75. Young Palestinian Association "Wael Zuaiter", Italy
 76. A Different Jewish Voice - EJJJ, Holland
 77. Centro di Documentazione e Solidarietà con i Popoli del Mediterraneo "Gabrio Avanzati", Italy
 78. Arbeitskreis Palaestina/Israel, Frankfurt (Main), Germany)
 79. Comitato di Solidarietà con il Popolo Palestinese - Torino (Palestine Solidarity Committee - Turin)
 80. AFPS (Association France Palestine Solidarité)
 81. Instituto de Estudios Políticos para América Latina y África -IEPALA
 82. Mütter gegen den Krieg Berlin- Brandenburg
 83. Bubbes and Zaydes (Grandparents) for Peace in the Middle East
 84. WILPF German section

Cultural Boycott Appeals

Over the past few months, open letters have been issued by Palestinian and Israeli BDS groups to Snoop Doggy Dog, Branford Marsalis, and Mercedes Sosa, all of whom are scheduled to perform to Israeli audiences.

29 June 2008 To Snoop from PACBI: *How can an artist whose name is prominently associated with this form of popular and freedom based musical expression, rap, be apathetic to the monstrosity of Israel's current war crimes in Gaza, its Apartheid Wall, declared illegal by the International Court of Justice at the Hague, or its continued violation of fundamental Palestinian rights?... It is also worth reminding you that Palestinian rappers and musicians in the occupied Palestinian territory, like all Palestinians under Israeli occupation, are denied their basic rights, including the "privilege" of freedom of expression which you – and all of us – so highly value.*

10 July 2008 Letter from Dorothy Naor to Mercedes Sosa: *I apologize for writing in English. My espanole es muy malo... I write to you as an Israeli Jewish activist against the Nakba and all the disasters that Israel has brought and continues daily to bring on Palestinian heads. Your own experience and struggles, your songs about the pain of exile, the fear of political violence, and the struggle for justice should bring the Palestinian cause close to your heart. They are a dispossessed people who for over 60 years have lived either as refugees who are not allowed to visit family or friends in their homeland or here under the military thumb of Israel's policies of expansion and ethnic cleansing... Israelis also suffer from their governments' policies. Israel's leaders from Ben Gurion till today have always made their goal expansion and ethnic cleansing. Consequently, Israelis have gone through 10 wars in less than 60 years. Israel cannot steal another people's land, humiliate, murder, demolish homes, uproot olive trees, and make life miserable without consequences for Israel's own population. Thus nowhere else in the world since WWII have so many Israelis been killed in violence. Scores more Palestinians than Israelis have died at the hands of Israel... Please, reconsider coming to Israel. Do not tarnish your own shining reputation with the grime of Israel's occupation.*

14 July 2008 Letter To Branford Marsalis from citizens of Israel who support the Palestinian Boycott campaign: *We wonder how a musician such as yourself, who is involved in one of the most liberating musical styles ever to exist, can perform in a country that is in constant violations of human and refugee rights. Israel is in fact an apartheid state, which denies millions of Palestinians basic human rights. Our advice and request is that you cancel the upcoming show in protest of the ongoing war crimes committed on a daily basis by Israel... Your arrival to Israel would mean a slap in the face to the Palestinian struggle for freedom and sovereignty. It would also be a slap in the face for us, Israeli citizens who object the immoral deeds done in our names, with our tax money.*

Palestinian Geographers Boycott International Conference due to Israeli Participation

1 July 2008 - The Palestinian Geographers Society informed the Tunisian Geographers Society that they will boycott the International Geographers Congress, due to be held in Tunis from August 12 to 14, because Israel is participating. Dr. Musalem Abu al-Helu, director of the Palestinian society stated Israeli representatives to the conference were "army officers who had committed war crimes against the Palestinians" as one of the main reasons behind his organization's boycott.

Bil'in Commences Legal Proceedings in Canada against Illegal Construction on their Land

8 July 2008 - The Palestinian village of Bil'in, in the occupied West Bank, announced that it has commenced legal proceedings in Canada against two Canadian Companies for committing war crimes. The case has been filed in the Quebec Superior Court sitting at Montreal, Canada. In the lawsuit, Bil'in alleges that Green Park International Inc. and Green Mount International Inc., both registered corporations in the Province of Quebec, acting as agents for Israel, are illegally constructing residential and other buildings on lands under the municipal jurisdiction of the Village and are marketing and selling condominium units to the civilian population of the State of Israel. Bil'in is seeking an immediate Order from the Canadian court stopping the illegal construction, punitive damages and other relief as set out in the claim. Upon obtaining such an Order in Canada, Bil'in intends to petition the Israeli Court to enforce the Canadian Court Order in Israel and the West Bank.

BNC Launches Global BDS Movement Website

9 July 2008 – The Palestinian BDS National Committee marked the third anniversary since the Unified Palestinian Civil Society Call for BDS by launching a new website for the global BDS movement. The website currently contains resources for BDS activists, news of the campaign in Palestine and around the world, regularly updated action-alerts, and profiles of complicit corporations and BDS campaigns around the world. The website is constantly being developed, and is scheduled to launch an Arabic version. Visit the site regularly at www.bdsmovement.net

Snoop Cancels Israel Gig

23 July 2008 - Citing technical reasons, the infamous and influential hip-hop celebrity Snoop Dogg (Calvin Broadus) heeded the calls of the BDS movement and canceled the Israel stop in his upcoming tour launching the new 'Ego Trippin' album.



Hang up on Motorola Campaign logo.

US Campaign to End the Occupation to Escalate 'Hang Up on Motorola' Campaign at National Conference

July 25-28 – Since its last national conference, the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation has begun a dialogue with Motorola and produced a factsheet and other campaign materials that can be used to inform others about Motorola's support for Israeli apartheid. The upcoming national conference will focus a great deal of discussion on developing the strategy for a systematic campaign targeting Motorola's support for the Israeli military.

For more information visit: www.endtheoccupation.org



In Memoriam

The Earth Is Closing on Us

The earth is closing in on us,
squeezing us through the last passage,
we tear off our limbs to pass through.
The earth is squeezing us.
I wish we were its wheat so we could die
and live again.
I wish the earth was our mother
So she could be kind to us.
I wish we were pictures on the rocks
for our dreams to carry
As mirrors.
We saw the faces of those to be killed by
the last of us
in the last defense of the soul.
We cried over their children's feast.
We saw the faces of those who will
throw our children
Out of the windows of the last space. Our
star will hang up in mirrors.
Where should we go after the last
frontiers?
Where should the birds fly after the last
sky?
Where should the plants sleep after the
last breath of air?
We will write our names with scarlet
steam.
We will cut the head off the song to be
finished by our flesh.
We will die here,
here in the last passage.
Here and here our blood
will plant its olive tree.

Mahmoud Darwish
1941 - 2008

Sa'eed Al-Atabah in al-Majdal



al-Majdal is a Palestinian town that was depopulated in the 1948 Nakba. Since then it was transformed into the Israeli city Ashkelon, the location of one of the cruelest Israeli prisons holding Palestinian political prisoners. The longest held Palestinian political prisoner, in fact the longest held political prisoner in the world, who has been imprisoned for 32 years is Sa'eed al-Atabah. While in the Ashkelon/Majdal prison, he wrote:

By virtue of being imprisoned on the soil of our homeland, in the throbbing heart of al-Majdal we achieve something valuable; a national achievement of sorts that others among our people have been banned from achieving: that is that we have achieved the implementation of our right of return completely – except that we are imprisoned. Implementation of the Return is an incredible achievement, even if you are forced to be a prisoner, it is enough that we wake up in the morning to breath in the air of the homeland, its smell and its perfumes gushing from the depths of home, from the blossom's of Palestine's oranges. We breathe in the special oxygen of Palestine, even if it is tainted with the poisons of injustice, oppression, tyranny, humiliation, suffocating gas and forced confinement in small cells, in an iron cage for decades. Nothing is better than this great privilege of being on the soil of the homeland. We are at home in al-Majdal, for as they say, home is the land in which you live in freedom and dignity, or the land in which you freely struggle for that which your hearts desire...

New on www.badil.org

Visit Badil's Nakba-60 Resource Page

The page includes:

- The recently released Nakba-60 Info-Packet (useful fact-sheets providing a historical and legal background to the Palestinian refugee issue, as well as colorful brochures for activists and journalists which provide information on the ongoing displacement of Palestinians as well as suggestions on how to support the Palestinian refugees' right of return campaign. The packet also includes a brochure titled "Q&A: What You Need to know about Palestinian Refugees and IDPs")

Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights

60 Nakba Campaign Resources

Resources may be used with attribution to Badil.

- Statements
- BADIL Packet
- Books
- al-Majdal Magazine
- Radio and Video
- Facts and Figures
- Maps
- Photos
- Posters
- BDS Campaign

Calendar of Nakba-60 Events

PO Box 728
Bethlehem, Palestine
Tel/Fax: 972-2-274-7346
Email: info@badil.org

- A List of global events commemorating 60 years since the forcible transfer of a majority of the Palestinian people and calling for the implementation of Palestinian refugees' right to return.

Hard-copies of the Info-Packet can be ordered by sending an email to mediaenglish@badil.org

The Nakba-60 Resource Page can be accessed directly at: <http://www.badil.org/Publications/badil-nakba-60-info-packet>

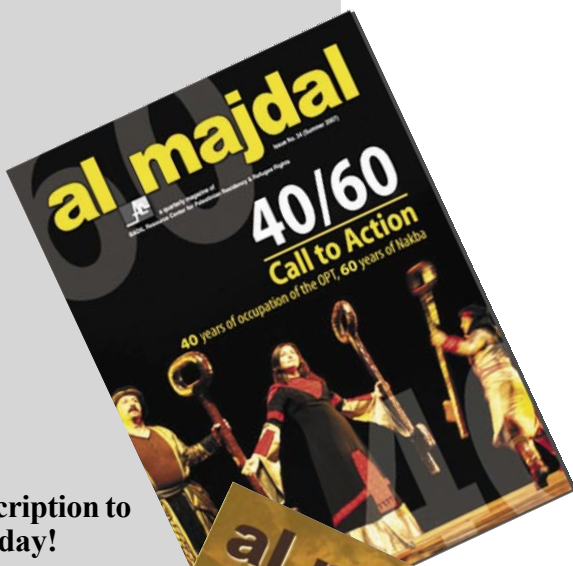


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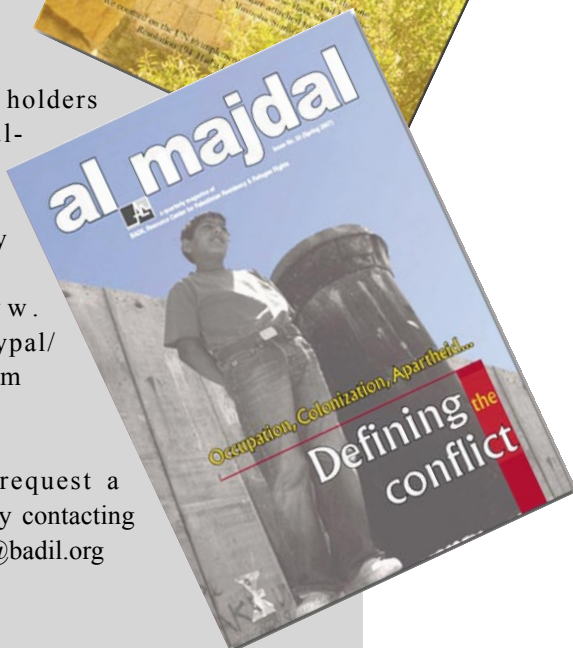
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About the meaning of al-Majdal

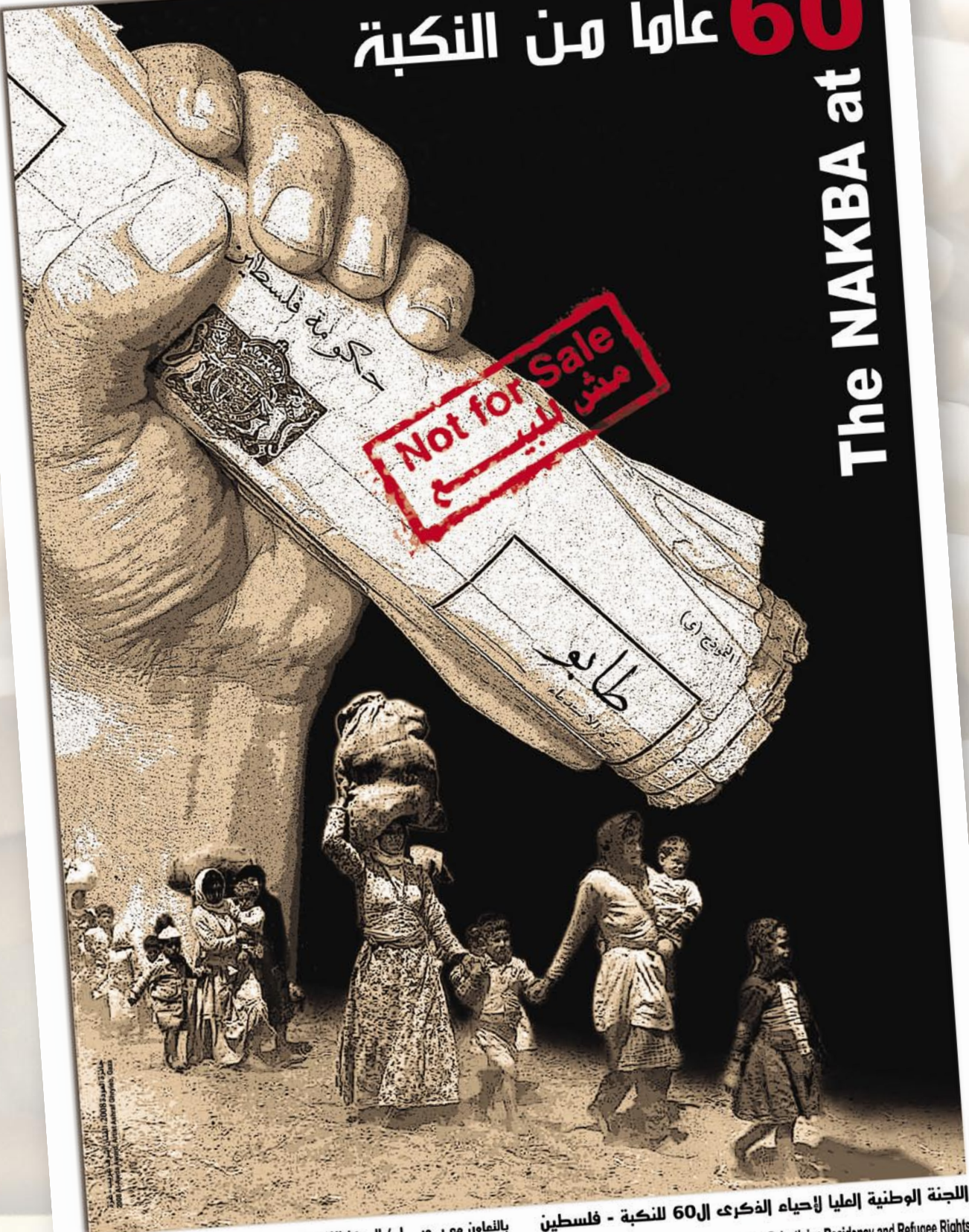
al-Majdal is an Aramaic word meaning fortress. The town was known as Majdal Jad during the Canaanite period for the god of luck. Located in the south of Palestine, al-Majdal was a thriving Palestinian city with some 11,496 residents on the eve of the 1948 war. Majdalawis produced a wide variety of crops including oranges, grapes, olives and vegetables. Palestinian residents of the town owned 43,680 dunums of land. The town itself was built on 1,346 dunums.

The town of al-Majdal suffered heavy air and sea attacks during the latter half of the 1948 war in Palestine. Israeli military operations (Operation Yoav, also known as "10 Plagues") aimed to secure control over the south of Palestine and force out the predominant Palestinian population. By November 1948, more than three-quarters of the city's residents had fled to the Gaza Strip. Israel subsequently approved the resettlement of 3,000 Jews in Palestinian refugee homes in the town. In late 1949 Israel began to drive out the remaining Palestinian population using a combination of military force and administrative measures. The process was completed by 1951. Israel continues to employ similar measures in the 1967 occupied West Bank, including eastern Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.

Palestinian refugees from al-Majdal now number over 71,000 persons. Like millions of other Palestinian refugees, Majdalawis are not allowed to return to their homes of origin. Israel opposes the return of the refugees due to their ethnic, national and religious origins. al-Majdal, BADIL's quarterly magazine, reports about and promotes initiatives aimed at achieving durable solutions for Palestinian refugees and displaced persons based on international law and relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

60 عامًا من النكبة

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اللجنة الوطنية العليا لإحياء الذكرى الـ 60 للنكبة - فلسطين
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