



Birthright Unplugged  
Provides travel, education, and movement-building programs in Palestine and North America  
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### **What is BDS?**

- “BDS” is an acronym for boycott, divestment and sanctions, and is a non-violent, global campaign to pressure Israel to end its violations of human rights and international law.
- BDS will end when Israel:
  - (1) Ends its illegal occupation of Palestinian lands and dismantles the Wall.
  - (2) Recognizes the equal rights of its Palestinian citizens.
  - (3) Respects the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes.

### **Why should anyone participate in BDS?**

- Because Palestinians are living under an illegal occupation and Israel continues to deny them their internationally recognized right to self-determination.
- Because Israel is an apartheid state that denies Palestinians equal rights and freedom of movement.
- Americans have a special obligation to do BDS because our government uses our taxes to fund Israel’s violations.

### **Why Israel?**

- Americans have a special concern with Israel because it is the largest single recipient of our country’s foreign military aid. In fiscal year 2008, the U.S. gave Israel close to \$2.5 billion in military aid ([www.state.gov/documents/organization/100014.pdf](http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/100014.pdf)), a number only expected to rise.
- Israel uses all that aid to finance its military and occupation forces. Israel would be unable to maintain its 40+ year occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem or its siege of the Gaza strip without this financial assistance.
- This means, then, that Israeli military expenditures are funded by the United States, rendering Americans financially responsible for Israel’s crimes.

### **Doesn’t BDS unfairly single out Israel?**

- No. BDS campaigns have targeted many countries for their human rights violations. For example, activists in Europe have long led boycott campaigns against Burma. This campaign happens to focus on Israeli violations of human rights.
- BDS, then, does not single out Israel. In fact, BDS treats Israel no differently than any other country guilty of human rights abuses. Supporting BDS is part and parcel

of an overall commitment to justice, a commitment consistent with opposition to human rights abuses anywhere in the world (e.g., Burma, Darfur, Kashmir, Tibet).

### **Isn't BDS anti-Semitic?**

- No. Israel is a state and like any other state, it must comply with international law. Critiquing that state's actions has nothing to do with condemning Judaism or Jewish people.
- It is important to remember that not all Israelis are Jewish – ending the second-class status of Palestinian citizens of Israel is a key demand of the BDS movement.
- Moreover, not all Jewish Israelis support their government; not all Jewish people support Israel; and many Jews *and* Israelis support BDS.
- For Israeli support of BDS, see [www.whoprofits.org](http://www.whoprofits.org) and [www.boycottisrael.info](http://www.boycottisrael.info).

### **Isn't BDS one-sided?**

- Yes. It stands on the side of the victims of occupation and apartheid, on the side of international law and human rights, and *against* the side of the occupier and those who violate human rights.

### **Won't BDS alienate Israelis?**

- It might. Our quarrel, however, is not with Israelis but with the Israeli government and Israeli institutions. These must change, not any individual Israeli person.

### **Won't BDS hurt Israelis who support Palestinian rights?**

- BDS may indirectly “hurt” some Israelis, even some who support Palestinian rights. Universities, for example, may not have the same opportunities for international collaboration if their institution is being boycotted, so individual researchers may be affected. Artists may experience a loss of income due to decreased demand for their art, or growers might find their produce costing more internationally.
- However, the goal of BDS is not to harm Israelis. The goal is to end Israel's illegal occupation and apartheid regime and restore to Palestinians their internationally recognized rights.

### **Won't BDS censor people?**

- No. BDS doesn't prevent Israelis or Israeli institutions from saying or doing anything. Rather, BDS calls on people of conscience to suspend any academic, cultural, and commercial partnerships that are funded by, in cooperation with, and/or support the state of Israel in an attempt to change its policies.
- So, a tourist boycott of Israel does not demand Israel close its hotels, and a consumer boycott of Israeli products does not demand that Israel cease producing goods. Boycotts demand that those who want to promote international law refrain from spending tourist and consumer dollars in an apartheid state in an attempt to pressure Israel to end its apartheid system.
- Academic and cultural boycotts also do not censor anybody. Israeli universities will still admit students and produce research, just as Israeli dance troupes will continue to perform and Israeli films will continue to be made. Academic and

- cultural boycotts demand that people of conscience refuse support for intellectual and cultural productions that serve, are funded by, or whitewash Israel's crimes.
- In short, decrying complicity in state violence and war crimes is not censorship, and refusing them financial and other support may be a mandate of the most basic kind.

### **BDS demands implementing the right of return for Palestinian refugees. Doesn't this mean the destruction of Israel?**

- According to international law, Palestinians who were dispossessed in the war of 1947-48 have the right to return to their homes and be compensated for their losses.
- However, Israel denies this right to Palestinians while promoting the citizenship and emigration of others—namely, Jewish people from all over the world—to its land. Effectively, Israel refuses citizenship and rights to non-Jews on the basis of their religion and ethnicity.
- However, human rights require that *no* state should be allowed to discriminate on the basis of religion, race, or anything else. Israel is no different.

### **Is Israel really an apartheid state?**

- "Apartheid" means separateness. The crime of apartheid has been defined by United Nations as "policies and practices of racial segregation and discrimination" which are "committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them" ([www.israelawresourcecenter.org/internationallaw/fulltext/apartheidconvention.htm](http://www.israelawresourcecenter.org/internationallaw/fulltext/apartheidconvention.htm)).
- Israel has done this. It has constructed a separate system of laws, schools, health care, roads and highways, identification papers, and citizenship based on ethnicity. Through this system of segregation (*havrada* in Hebrew), Palestinians are daily deprived of access to land, water, housing, health care, decent roads, freedom of movement, education, and work for the sole reason that *they are not Jews*. In essence, Israel has created a democracy for Jewish people only.
- Israel has also nearly completed construction of the Wall, a network of barriers including 8-meter high concrete walls, military watchtowers, and barbed wire fencing that, when complete, will have illegally annexed some 46% percent of the West Bank. The path of the Wall makes clear the nature of Israeli apartheid: separation in service of dispossession.

### **But aren't Israel's policies motivated by security rather than racism?**

- If that were true, the Wall in the West Bank would be constructed along the 1967 "Green Line" border. But 85% of it is built *inside* the West Bank. Its snaking path—which effectively appropriates Palestinian land for the Israeli "side" while leaving the Palestinian community of farmers who own that land on the

other—exposes it as essentially a land grab rather than a security measure. For a map of the Wall's path, see [www.stophthewall.org/maps/45.shtml](http://www.stophthewall.org/maps/45.shtml).

- Even if Israel's motivations were security-based, erecting an 8-meter high concrete Wall, implementing a vast apparatus of ethnic, religious, and racial segregation, perpetuating a military occupation, and engaging in regular house demolitions and punitive restrictions on people's daily lives are not the way to achieve security. This is instead a recipe for the perpetuation of oppression.
- Finally, we must remember that Palestinians are also entitled to security. Currently, Palestinians live in profound *insecurity* – fear, isolation, forced unemployment, segregation, and ghettoization – so that *others* can feel “safe.” *No one* will be secure, however, until Israel complies with international law and upholds the rights of all people, regardless of race, religion, or ethnicity.

### **PALESTINE BASED RESOURCES**

Palestinian BDS Campaign National Committee (BNC), the central body coordinating BDS work in Palestine and globally. Great resource for BDS news, analysis, links, and successes. **[www.bdsmovement.net](http://www.bdsmovement.net)**

Grassroots Palestinian Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign (Stop the Wall). Offers BDS analysis and campaign tools, powerpoint slideshows, maps, stickers, etc. **[www.stophthewall.org](http://www.stophthewall.org)**

Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI), initiators of this boycott call and an excellent resource on campaign support internationally. **[www.pacbi.org](http://www.pacbi.org)**

### **ISRAELI RESOURCES**

Who Profits. International campaign research support: **[www.whoprofits.org](http://www.whoprofits.org)**

BOYCOTT! From Within. Petition and readers: **[www.boycottisrael.info](http://www.boycottisrael.info)**