

The Call for Boycott, Sanctions, and Divestment against Israeli Apartheid



1. What is the Call for Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions against Israeli Occupation and Apartheid?

The Call to Isolate Apartheid Israel, issued by the Palestinian grassroots Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign on the day that the International Court of Justice declared the Wall illegal, became a rallying cry for the national movement when on 9 July 2005 the Palestinian Unified Call for Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions against Israel was published. So far, it has been endorsed by over 170 Palestinian parties, organizations, trade unions and movements representing the Palestinian people in the 1967 and 1948 territories and in the diaspora.

The main goals of the Call for Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions are:

- To reveal to the world the nature of Israel's occupation and apartheid regime
- To give human rights a real value by making Israel accountable and forcing it to pay a price for its crimes
- To reveal and highlight the responsibility of the international community in supporting Israeli crimes and violations of Human Rights and International Law

- Above all, to end international support for Israeli Occupation and Apartheid, since apartheid can never survive without external Assistance

We have struggled for decades against the racism, colonization, and military occupation imposed on us by Jewish settlers via the Zionist Movement and the foundation of the state of Israel. Since then, the process of colonization, occupation, and entrenchment of the apartheid system over Palestine (and later the Golan Heights) has continued at a rapid pace towards the definitive destruction of Palestinian lives, livelihoods, lands, heritage, and future. The daily crimes of the Israeli Occupation need to be stopped, the refugees return, and justice and liberation assured in Palestine.

People throughout the world are expressing their solidarity with the Palestinian struggle. The international community has expressed its views in countless UN resolutions, and the highest judicial body in the world – the International Court of Justice in The Hague – has confirmed the illegality of the Apartheid Wall, as well as the Israeli Occupation and colonial settlement policy. The ICJ has reminded all states of their “obligation not to render aid or assistance in maintaining the situation created by such construction.” However, Israel has refused to recognize and comply with this decision, just as it has done with all other resolutions regarding Palestinian rights. Only concrete international pressure can ensure that these decisions are implemented and that Israeli Occupation and Apartheid is finally brought to an end.

Moreover, the responsibility of the international community lies not only in not enforcing its own decisions; it has also continued to directly support Israeli Occupation and Apartheid. Most of the countries of the world give direct or indirect support to the Occupation, expulsion, massacre, and Bantustanization of the Palestinian people. This needs to stop!

2. Are we strong enough to make the Call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions effective?

The Boycott Movement against South African Apartheid started in the late 1950s with small groups of activists and exiles in Britain and Sweden. It took two decades before it became a global movement. But once it was initiated, this movement led eventually and inevitably to the overthrow of apartheid in South Africa. While the Palestinian people is continue their resistance and prepare for a boycott inside Palestine, the supporters of Palestine today can also count on existing boycott and divestment campaigns being carried out throughout the world and on a widespread call for sanctions at the national and international levels. But just as important, the movement can help find its way forward by learning from the past experiences of the anti-apartheid struggle.

3. How are the calls for boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israeli Occupation and Apartheid linked?

Boycott, divestment, and sanctions are three different strategies that share the same motivations and goals: providing pressure in order to isolate Israeli Occupation and Apartheid.

Our Call begins from the fact that resolutions demanding that Israel respect the most fundamental rights of the Palestinian people have already been expressed on many occasions. However, the international community has never been willing to take up the enforcement of any of its own decisions. We are thus calling upon the people of the world to demand that their governments and institutions finally implement their own statements and resolutions through grassroots boycott, divestment, and sanctions campaigns.

4. What are boycott campaigns?

Boycott campaigns are the most immediate form of action. Boycott actions help to raise awareness in the streets, in the shops, and in our homes. By its nature, a boycott is an instrument of the powerless against the powerful; boycotts represent movements of ordinary people who refuse to support injustice and who use their right to choose as consumers in order to support – in this case – the Palestinian quest for freedom and justice, and to express their opposition to the political positions of their governments and institutions. Boycott is thus a means of pressuring governments and institutions from below to take action on a political level against Israeli Occupation and Apartheid.

5. How can I recognize Israeli products? Are there lists of products to be boycotted?

All products packaged and exported by Israel bear a barcode that starts with “7290.” However, many products are packaged abroad or are produced by multinationals and companies supporting Israeli Occupation and Apartheid – these products will be coded in other ways.

In order to orient boycott initiatives and consumers willing to make a choice against Israeli Occupation and Apartheid, many websites offer comprehensive lists of products to be boycotted.



6. What is the academic boycott?

The academic boycott calls upon students and scholars to stop cooperation with their Israeli counterparts and to demand this from the universities and academic institutions of which they are a part. Israeli academic institutions and scholars are not only instrumental in perpetuating and teaching Israeli racist and colonial ideologies, they are also sites where the theories, plans, and projects of Israeli Occupation and Apartheid are elaborated and intellectually supported.

Academic boycotts can take various forms:



- Stopping or refusal of joint academic and research projects with Israeli institutions
- Suspension of all forms of funding and subsidies to Israeli academic institutions
- Refusal to participate in conferences organized, hosted, or involving Israeli academic institutions
- Refusal to contribute with research and studies to Israeli academic institutions or publications
- Promotion of divestment and disinvestment of international academic institutions from Israel and from companies supporting Israeli Occupation and Apartheid

At this very moment, Israel is destroying the Palestinian academy and educational system as a whole through closures, the targeting of students and professors, and the denial of access to educational facilities. At such a moment, safeguarding an Israeli academy that is supportive of these crimes is not supporting intellectual freedom, but rather supporting its destruction. An academic boycott forces students and academics around the world to take seriously their intellectual responsibility to refuse to support the status quo through a bogus form of intellectual "neutrality." The movement for an academic boycott seeks instead to be part of a movement of students, scholars, and academic institutions that work to bring about social change and social justice.

7. What is the cultural boycott?

The cultural boycott is a means for artists and cultural institutions to express their opposition and outrage against Israeli Apartheid and Occupation. It is a call upon artists and cultural institutions not to lend their names and talents to Israeli Occupation and Apartheid and not to continue "business as usual" in the face of the ongoing crimes committed by Israel. The cultural boycott is especially important, considering the ongoing Israeli Occupation that is aimed at destroying and replacing the entire Palestinian cultural heritage.

Cultural boycotts can include:

- Refusal to perform in Israel
- Refusal of copyright or distribution rights to Israeli institutions and companies
- Opposition to Israeli participation in cultural initiatives as long as Palestinian artists and their people are still suffering under Israeli Occupation and Apartheid.

8. What is the sports boycott?

The sports boycott has its main precedent in the boycott imposed against South African Apartheid on all levels. For many countries, sports are a way to represent and assert themselves and their politics in front of the international community, especially at international events such as the Olympics and the World Cup. Israel is no exception to this. The sporting community, federations, athletes, and sports fans can express their opposition to Israeli crimes and call for an end to Israeli Occupation and Apartheid by contesting Israeli participation in international and bi-national competitions.

9. What is divestment?

Divestment campaigns involve organizations, groups, and movements in coordinated efforts to pressure enterprises and institutions to divest/disinvest from Israeli Occupation and Apartheid. Divestment is a political tool developed by the anti-apartheid student movement during its campaigns against South African Apartheid to challenge large corporations financing and benefiting from the exploitation of blacks in South Africa. Divestment campaigns, however, can also be taken up by any organization to force companies and institutions to divest from Israeli companies or from companies that support Israeli Occupation and Apartheid. Direct divestment/disinvestment campaigns have been organized by labor organizations, churches, and local or national networks to mobilize pressure directly against companies to stop their cooperation with Israeli Occupation and Apartheid.



10. What are sanctions?

Sanctions were developed as a means to enforce international law. Typically, sanctions cut off trade and investments, preventing a target country from buying or selling goods in the global marketplace. Sanctions may aim at particular items, like arms or oil. They may also cut off air traffic, suspend or drastically curtail diplomatic relations, block movement of persons, bar investments, or freeze international bank deposits. There is a fundamental difference between sanctions enforced to support the struggle of an oppressed people and sanctions enforced to actively oppress a people. In fact, in most cases sanctions have been imposed to oppress the populations of countries seen as hostile to the interests of the U.S. or the Western world. They have thus been built on already existing structures of exploitation and dependency.

Yet, in some cases sanctions have been specifically aimed at supporting the struggle of a people against oppression. For example, sanctions against Apartheid South Africa effectively supported the struggle against apartheid, led from within South Africa by the ANC. Significantly, the U.S. was among the last countries to impose sanctions, while Israel never did. The reason for the specific character of the sanctions against South African Apartheid had everything to do with the fact that they came out of longstanding campaigns created and supported by thousands of grassroots efforts, linked to sustained boycott and divestment campaigns. These various coordinated campaigns from below eventually mounted so much pressure that governments were forced to take action in the form of sanctions.

Palestinian grassroots Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign
www.StoptheWall.org