

WHAT IS BDS

OVERVIEW

Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) is a Palestinian-led movement for freedom, justice and equality. BDS upholds the simple principle that Palestinians are entitled to the same rights as the rest of humanity.

Israel is occupying and colonising Palestinian land, discriminating against Palestinian citizens of Israel and denying Palestinian refugees the right to return to their homes. Inspired by the South African anti-apartheid movement, the BDS call urges action to pressure Israel to comply with international law.

BDS is now a vibrant global movement made up of unions, academic associations, churches and grassroots movements across the world. Eleven years since its launch, BDS is having a major impact and is effectively challenging international support for Israeli apartheid and settler-colonialism.

colonialism.

Ongoing injustice

For nearly seventy years, Israel has denied Palestinians their fundamental rights and has refused to comply with international law.

Israel maintains a regime of settler colonialism, apartheid and occupation over the Palestinian people. This is only possible because of international support. Governments fail to hold Israel to account, while corporations and institutions across the world help Israel to oppress Palestinians.

Because those in power refuse to act to stop this injustice, Palestinian

civil society has called for a global citizens' response of solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for freedom, justice and equality.

What are Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions?

BOYCOTTS involve withdrawing support for Israel and Israeli and international companies that are involved in the violation of Palestinian human rights, as well as complicit Israeli sporting, cultural and academic institutions.

DIVESTMENT campaigns urge banks, local councils, churches, pension funds and universities to withdraw investments from all Israeli companies and from international companies involved in violating Palestinian rights.

SANCTIONS campaigns pressure governments to fulfil their legal obligation to hold Israel to account including by ending military trade, free-trade agreements and expelling Israel from international forums such as the UN and FIFA.

The call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions

In 2005, Palestinian civil society organisations called for boycotts, divestment and sanctions (BDS) as a form of non-violent pressure on Israel.

The BDS movement was launched by 170 Palestinian unions, political parties, refugee networks, women's organisations, professional associations, popular resistance committees and other Palestinian civil society bodies.

Inspired by the South African anti-apartheid movement, the Palestinian BDS call urges nonviolent pressure on Israel until it complies with international law by meeting three demands:

- Ending its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantling the Wall

International law recognises the West Bank including East Jerusalem, Gaza and the Syrian Golan Heights as occupied by Israel. As part of its military occupation, Israel steals land and forces Palestinians into ghettos, surrounded by checkpoints, settlements and watchtowers and an illegal apartheid Wall. Israel has imposed a medieval siege on Gaza , turning it into the largest open air prison in the world. Israel also regularly carries out large-scale assaults on Gaza that are widely condemned as constituting war crimes and crimes against humanity.



Qalandiya Checkpoint in the West Bank in 2009 (Anne Paq/Activestills).

- Recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality

One-fifth of Israel's citizens are Palestinians who remained inside the armistice lines after 1948. They are subjected to a system of racial discrimination enshrined in more than 50 laws that impact every aspect of their lives. The Israeli government continues to forcibly displace Palestinian communities in Israel from their land. Israeli leaders routinely and openly incite racial violence against them.



Protest against the 2014 attack on Gaza in Haifa, Israel (Oren Ziv/Activestills).

- Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN Resolution 194

Since its violent establishment in 1948 through the ethnic cleansing of more than half of the indigenous people of Palestine, Israel has set out to control as much land and uproot as many Palestinians as it can. As a result of this systematic forced displacement, there are now more than 7.25 million Palestinian refugees. They are denied their right to return to their homes simply because they are not Jewish.



Palestinian refugees in Lebanon marching for their right to return (Matthew Cassel/Activestills).