

Background Report

Title: Boycott of Peace: The BDS Movement and the West

Author : Walter Klitz and Nicolas Klein-Zirbes, Friedrich Naumann Foundation Jerusalem

Jerusalem, October 5, 2015

The anti-Israeli boycott movement, BDS, has gained international influence in recent years. Their political presence has been gaining ground continuously in the Palestinian territories as well. According to recent surveys conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR), 86% of surveyed Palestinians, notwithstanding their economic dependence, are in favor of boycotting Israeli products, as well as academic and cultural exchanges. Throughout its history, the movement, which relies on exaggerated rhetoric and symbolism, seems to be rooted particularly on the left of the political and social spectrum in Europe.

1.) Preliminary Remarks

The so-called "BDS Movement," founded in 2005 by a group of 171 mainly Palestinian organizations, defines itself as a boycott campaign against Israel. Its acronym BDS stands for "Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions." This report addresses the question where the BDS movement, with its ever growing number of international supporters, is positioned ideologically and what will be the consequences of its increasing expansion, particularly in Europe and the USA. To better understand the background, we shall first give a general overview of the history of boycotts against Israel, followed by a closer look at the BDS Movement's emergence. We will identify the differences between the BDS and the numerous historical boycott movements against Israel in terms of organization, programs and tools used. Then we will highlight the declared objectives of the BDS Movement, testing the argumentative rigor of its theoretical rationales and comparing its objectives to the actions of BDS representatives in daily practice. Particular attention shall be given to the BDS' rhetoric and symbolism. On the basis of all this information, the movement will be evaluated from a liberal viewpoint, with the goal of developing political action recommendations for peace-oriented stakeholders to adequately and effectively confront BDS.

2.) The History of Boycotts against Israel

It should be noted at the outset that the economic boycott of Israel has a long history. It dates back even further than the formal existence of Israel itself. Even before the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, the *Yishuv*, the Jewish community in the League of Nations Mandate territory of Palestine, faced several episodes of Arab boycott efforts. The Palestinian Arab Congress, the unofficial political governing body of the Palestinian people under British rule,

adopted the first quasi-institutional boycott during its fifth meeting in Nablus in 1922.¹ It was preceded by similar resolutions of less significant predecessor organizations. Since there were no authorities to control a boycott during the British Mandate, its implementation was limited to using social pressure. In the course of the Palestinian uprising of 1929, this pressure culminated in violent attacks not only against Jews, but also against Arabs who disregarded the boycott. Subsequent to the clashes, at the end of October 1929, the call for a boycott was intensified and broadened to include the surrounding Arab regions.² It produced results, at least in the larger cities under British Mandate. Within a short time, business relations to Jews were stigmatized and used to justify violent acts within the Palestinian community. This is documented in a newspaper report published by *The Sydney Morning Herald* on December 19, 1929: "In Jerusalem, Jaffa, Haifa and other cities the boycott is carried out with such rigor that no Arab dare enter a Jewish shop except on the sly. Those who have defied the order have taken the consequences in the form of beatings or showers of excrement and filth over their heads."³

In the 1930s, numerous Arab associations and representations positioned themselves as supporters of the boycott against the growing Yishuv. Along with the Palestine Arab Congress, which repeatedly passed new resolutions, other examples include the Arab Workers Committee, the World Islamic Congress and the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem.⁴ While SA troops in Germany painted anti-Semitic graffiti on Jewish-owned stores, Arab groups in Jerusalem also marked the shops of Jewish traders in order to intimidate them and stop Jewish immigration.⁵ Nevertheless, the Jewish population continued to increase during the 1930s, even against the backdrop of growing anti-Semitism in Europe.⁶

Finally, in March 1945, the creation of the Arab League established a political body that continues to this day to represent the common interests of the Arab States (currently 22). A few months after its founding, in December 1945, the Arab League's highest decision-making body passed Resolution 16 in which it dictated the "Boycott of Zionist goods and products," using the terms *Jewish* and *Zionist* interchangeably.⁷ In subsequent years, the Arab League expanded its decision with a number of other resolutions and special regionally oriented regulations, until finally in 1954 their *Unified Law on the Boycott of Israel* (Resolution 849) unified the boycott in all Arab countries.⁸ The Arab League's boycott system is structured in three tiers:

1. The primary boycott prohibits Arab nations and their citizens from entering into trade or business relations with Israeli citizens, firms, and the Israeli government.
2. The secondary boycott is the second tier of the boycott structure. It imposes a penalty on international enterprises and persons that engage in business with Israel and

¹ Walter Henry Nelson, Terence C. F. Prittie, *The Economic War against the Jews*, Random House, 1977, p. 9.

² U.S. International Trade Commission, *Effects of the Arab League Boycott of Israel on U.S. Businesses*, 1994, p. 6.

³ H. I. Katibah, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, December 19, 1929, p. 10.

⁴ Gil Feiler, *From Boycott to Economic Cooperation: The Political Economy of the Arab Boycott of Israel*, Routledge, 2013, p. 23.

⁵ *The Telegraph* (Brisbane), October 21, 1936, p. 15.

⁶ Itamar Rabinovich, Jehuda Reinharz, *Israel in the Middle East: Documents and Readings on Society, Politics, and Foreign Relations, Pre-1948 to the Present*, Brandeis University Press, 2008, p. 571.

⁷ *The Encyclopedia of the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Political, Social, and Military History ABC-CLIO*, 2008, p. 120.

⁸ Gary A. Olson, *Traditions and Transitions in Israel Studies: Books on Israel, Volume VI*, SUNY Press, 2012, p. 281.

therefore are not adhering to the primary boycott according to the guidelines of the Arab League.

3. The tertiary boycott, the third tier, penalizes business with international enterprises or persons in Arab nations who maintain business relationships with companies or persons that cooperate with Israeli firms. This, simply put, penalizes trade with international entities that do not comply with the terms of the Arab League's secondary boycott.

The responsibility for enforcing and implementing the boycott lies with the respective national *Central Boycott Office*. There is a joint Black List of companies that do not comply with the secondary or tertiary boycott requirements. From 1979 on, beginning with the Peace Treaty between Israel and Egypt⁹, until the year 1996, most recently in the course of the Oslo Peace Process, most countries of the Arab League, including the Palestinian Authority, ended the boycott of Israel at least in part, some completely. Although the Arab League's boycott decisions are *de jure* still in effect, only Lebanon continues to enforce all three tiers of the boycott.¹⁰ Syria's national legislative authority also plans to implement the boycott rigorously, but this is not recognized in a report prepared by the US *Congressional Research Service*, published in June 2015. This suggests that the current political instability in Syria makes it impossible to confirm whether the boycott, stipulated by law, is in fact implemented.

Although the Arab League's non-cooperation represents the longest and most comprehensive chapter in the history of anti-Israeli boycotts, Israel's economic power continued to increase thanks to its international network, even while the boycott was in effect.¹¹ Consequently, the objective of bringing the Jewish State to its knees by isolating it economically must be considered as failed.

3.) The Emergence and Initiators of the BDS Movement

On July 9, 2005, shortly after the end of the second Intifada, 171 mainly Palestinian NGOs, trade unions and other advocacy groups founded the *BDS Movement* by publishing an online "Call for BDS."¹² In order to understand the content of the BDS Movement's program, still official today, it is important to shed light on the most important events surrounding the Middle East Conflict from the turn of the millennium until the formation of BDS.

The consolidation of organizations from within the "Palestinian civil society," which in 2005 became the BDS Movement, must by no means be understood as the initial spark for the modern boycott movement. Instead, it served as a catalyst for the influence of a previously uncoordinated boycott movement on public discourse. The process of merging numerous existing, decentralized interest groups into a kind of umbrella organization enabled the movement to bundle common interests and facilitate a uniform presence. Ideologically related

⁹ Treaty of Peace between the Arab Republic of Egypt and the State of Israel, Washington on 26 March 1979.

¹⁰ Martin A. Weiss, Arab League Boycott of Israel, Congressional Research Service, 2015.

¹¹ The Israeli Economy - Fundamentals, Characteristics and Historic Overview, Ministry of Finance, State of Israel, 2011.

¹² Call for BDS, July 9, 2005, <http://www.bdsmovement.net/call>.

precursors with identical objectives that were later absorbed in or completely replaced by the BDS Movement had begun their activism against Israel just a few years before. The *Boycott Israeli Goods* campaign (BIG), initiated in the UK in 2001 by the *Palestine Solidarity Campaign*, can be identified as the first foray into boycotts, supported in large numbers by the Western public. The signatories of BIG included the new Leader of the British Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn, as is documented in archived snapshots of the official website from the year 2001.¹³ There is no longer an independent BIG campaign. Instead, the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, in the "Boycott" section of its web site, refers exclusively to BDS and calls itself the BDS founder in England.¹⁴ The URL of an American offshoot directly links to the online presence of the BDS campaign.¹⁵ In a letter published by the British newspaper *The Guardian* in 2002, 125 international scientists called for an academic boycott of Israel.¹⁶ With reference to the academic boycott in the UK, Omar Barghouti, who would become one of the founders of BDS, formed the *Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel* (PACBI) in 2004, one year prior to the creation of BDS.¹⁷

It is striking that the first groupings similar to BDS in the early years of the new millennium sprouted primarily in the political environment of the Left to extreme Left in the United Kingdom. Apart from the historical entanglement of Great Britain with the Palestinian region, a possible explanation for the fact that the boycott movement formed in the United Kingdom could be the historical strength of the earlier British boycott against South-African apartheid. The British Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM), founded in London just like the BIG campaign, spearheaded Western resistance against segregation and proclaimed as early as 1945 a consumer and academic boycott, as well as divestment and sanctions.¹⁸ In fact, the AAM was able to influence the UN General Assembly in the early 1960s through a targeted campaign to adopt resolutions that condemned the apartheid regime in South Africa and imposed sanctions against it.¹⁹ It is probable that the successes of this organization, active until 1994, were still firmly embedded in the British society's collective memory at the turn of the millennium. The name of the anti-Israeli boycott campaign, founded in England in 2001, *Boycott Israeli Goods*, is a modification of the slogan for the boycott against South Africa.²⁰ This case only exemplifies how the BDS campaign seems to orient itself along the lines of the AAM, which provided the BDS with a strategic blueprint for effective boycott management.

¹³ Boycott Israeli Goods, Statement of Intent, June 26, 2001, downloaded from the web archive Wayback Machine https://web.archive.org/web/20020301015632fw_/http://www.aquascript.com/psc/campaigns.asp?d=y&tid=100.

¹⁴ <http://www.palestinecampaign.org/campaign/palestiniancall/>, last checked on September 28, 2015.

¹⁵ www.boycottisraeligoods.org, last checked on September 28, 2015.

¹⁶ Open letter, More pressure for Mid East peace, April 6, 2002, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/apr/06/israel.guardianletters>, last checked on September 28, 2015.

¹⁷ Peter Beaumont, To boycott or not - the new Israeli question, June 10, 2006, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/jun/10/israel.internationaleducationnews>, last checked on September 28, 2015.

¹⁸ <http://www.aamarchives.org/history/boycott-movement.html>, last checked on September 28, 2015.

¹⁹ E. S. Reddy, AAM and UN: partners in the international campaign against apartheid, June 26, 1999, South Africa House, <http://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/aam-and-un-partners-international-campaign-against-apartheid>, last checked on September 28, 2015.

²⁰ Poster of the Anti Apartheid Movement, http://blog.archiveshub.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2014/07/boycott_po001.jpg.



The slogan "Every bite buys a bullet" on a poster of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement from 1959 and on the now defunct web site of the British Boycott Israeli Goods campaign in July 2004. It can be downloaded as it appeared at the time via an Internet archive.²¹

Chronologically and spiritually, the modern boycott movement since the turn of the millennium, characterized by its international nature, lies within the context of the *2001 World Conference against Racism*, hosted by the United Nations in Durban, and the accompanying NGO Forum. The negotiations in Durban, originally conceived as a conference against racism and hosted by South Africa, symbolic because of its apartheid past, triggered a controversy before they even started. The point of contention was the decision text that had been drafted in Tehran, Iran, without the Israeli delegation. Several passages of the draft text contained allegations that openly denounced Israeli politics as racist and equated it with South African apartheid. These passages were struck after the USA reacted to them by announcing its intention to withdraw from the conference. In the course of the negotiations in Durban, the US and Israeli delegations would nevertheless walk out in protest. This was prompted by trends in the negotiations, capable of winning a majority, aimed at condemning Israel in the World Conference's final declaration as the only State with an alleged racist regime. Prior to that, a majority of the simultaneously held NGO Forum, attended by roughly 4,000 NGO representatives from around the world, had already agreed to a text that defamed Israel as an "apartheid state as in the case of South Africa."²² They called for "the imposition of mandatory and comprehensive sanctions and embargoes, the full cessation of all links (diplomatic, economic, social, aid,

²¹ Banner on the Boycott Israeli Goods campaign web site, 2003, downloaded through the web archive Wayback Machine, <https://web.archive.org/web/20030602155636/http://www.bigcampaign.org/index.asp>.

²² UN Daily Highlights of the Durban Conference, September 8, 2001, <http://www.un.org/WCAR/dh/>, last read on September 28, 2015.

military cooperation and training) between all states and Israel." The NGO Forum also called for a reinstatement of UN Resolution 3379 dating back to 1975, which Kofi Annan had described as the "low point" in UN history and which defined Zionism as a form of racism until it was repealed in 1991.²³

The approach of isolating Israel politically by denouncing it as an apartheid state – an approach that for the first time proved to be effective on the UN stage – is a way of delegitimizing and became known as "Durban Strategy" subsequent to the World Conference.²⁴ Avowed anti-Zionist leaders, such as the American left-wing extremist Sherry Wolf, declare openly that the roots of the campaign lie in Durban. In a 2014 article for the *International Socialist Review*, Wolf, herself a long-term supporter of the BDS, wrote:

"The initiators were encouraged by the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance that was organized by UNESCO in Durban, South Africa, at which a draft statement opposed 'movements based on racism and discriminatory ideas, in particular the Zionist movement, which is based on racial superiority.'"²⁵

In the same article, Wolf calls the members of the Internationalist Socialist Organization "active participants in campus and community-based BDS groups" and positive examples of living left international solidarity. She refers those socialists who consider BDS "not radical enough" to the ultimate and overriding common goal: "[...] even landing financial and ideological blows against Israel, it is ultimately a struggle for reforms within capitalism—an exploitative system that is part of an imperial order."

Hence, it is the common anti-Zionist and anti-American ideology that links the uncompromising Palestinian and Socialist camps. A comparison can be drawn between the Cold War years when the Soviet and Arab cooperation of convenience in the UN General Assembly – a cooperation which coincidentally led to a majority and unified voting bloc that paved the way for the eventual repeal of the Zionism-Racism Resolution 3379²⁶ – and today where large parts of leftist organizations have shared interests with the Palestinians who are perceived to be suppressed by the West's colonial imperialism. Against this background, it is not surprising that traditionally left-leaning interest groups such as trade unions, student associations and solidarity movements constitute the overwhelming majority of the Western precursors of what

²³ NGO Forum Declaration, September 3, 2001, <http://www.i-p-o.org/racism-ngo-decl.htm>, last read on September 28, 2015.

²⁴ Sarah Mandel, The radicals behind the Anglican Church, Jerusalem Post, February 26, 2006, <http://www.jpost.com/Israel/The-radicals-behind-the-Anglican-Church>; David Parsons, A Christmas wish for 'justice', Jerusalem Post, December 24, 2006, <http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Op-Ed-Contributors/A-Christmas-wish-for-justice>, last read on September 28, 2015.

²⁵ Sherry Wolf, What's behind the rise of BDS?, International Socialist Review, Issue #93, <http://isreview.org/issue/93/whats-behind-rise-bds>, last read on September 28, 2015.

²⁶ Voting result of UN Resolution 3379, UNBISNET, <http://unbisnet.un.org:8080/ipac20/ipac.jsp?session=108V0691N26Y9.82&menu=search&aspect=power&npp=50&ipp=20&profile=voting&tri=&index=VM&term=A/RES/3379%28XXX%29>, last read on September 28, 2015.

was to become the BDS campaign and the 171 signatories of the "Palestinian Civil Society Call for BDS."²⁷

The BDS Movement and its alliance of International Leftists and anti-peace Palestinian NGOs combines the time-honored Arab tool of boycotting with the new post-Durban narrative of human rights-crushing apartheid based on Israel as a racist aggressor in the Middle East. Considering that recent boycott movements are rooted in British and American political interest groups, there is a note of irony, if not intrinsic hypocrisy in the BDS Movement's allegation of Western colonialism.

4. Guidelines of the Boycott

The guidelines of the boycott, which continue unchanged today, are stipulated in the "Palestinian Civil Society Call" that marked the official birth of the BDS movement. The call appeals to "international civil society organizations and people of conscience all over the world to impose broad boycotts and implement divestment initiatives against Israel similar to those applied to South Africa in the apartheid era."²⁸ In another sentence, "conscientious Israelis" are also invited to support the call. The boycott is said to serve "justice and genuine peace." Furthermore, it is said to have the goal of "international solidarity, moral consistency and resistance to [...] oppression." As possible channels of "resistance," the BDS web site lists "academic," "cultural" and "consumer boycott" along with "divestment" and "sanctions."²⁹ The duration of the boycott and its "non-violent punitive measures" was to depend on the willingness of Israel to "meet its obligation to recognize the Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination" and comply with "the precepts of international law." The BDS imposes three specific conditions on the government of Israel. In its Call for a Boycott, the BDS Movement demands that Israel comply 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."³⁰

The "consumer boycott" proposes that consumers abstain from purchasing certain Israeli products. The deciding factor is the alleged entanglement of the Israeli government in human rights violations. Hence, the movement calls for a boycott of "Israeli companies, goods and services or of international companies involved in Israeli policies violating Palestinian human rights and international law."³¹ It is unclear how BDS defines the companies' involvement. In 2004, the International Court of Justice published an Advisory Opinion upon request of the UN

²⁷ Call for BDS, loc. cit. (footnote 12).

²⁸ Call for BDS, loc. cit. (footnote 12).

²⁹ Web site of the BDS Movement, <http://www.bdsmovement.net/>, last read on September 28, 2015.

³⁰ Call for BDS, loc. cit. (footnote 12).

³¹ Consumer boycott, web site of the BDS Movement <http://www.bdsmovement.net/activecamps/consumer-boycott>, last read on September 28, 2015.

General Assembly in which it accused Israel of violating international humanitarian law and human rights in the occupied territories of the West Bank by building a barrier.³² There is, however, no indication on the BDS web site that the boycott should be focused on companies that do business in the West Bank. Instead, export goods from the entire territory of the State of Israel are listed under the boycott. In addition, the "Call for BDS" is directed "against Israel." The logical consequence is that the BDS movement charges not only the Israeli companies residing in the West Bank, but all Israeli companies with having indirectly violated human rights. In an interview in June 2015, Omar Barghouti, the aforementioned BDS co-founder, called the differentiation between Israel and the occupied territories "artificial and untenable."³³ However, the consumer boycott does by no means only provide for passive refusal to purchase. BDS also recommends "diverse actions: Pickets of retailers, letter-writing campaigns, pressure from civil society organizations such as NGOs, faith groups and trade unions. Popular pressure has forced retailers to stop selling Israeli produce and produce from illegal settlements in particular."³⁴

Barghouti plays a particularly important role in the BDS Movement's academic and cultural boycott. BDS has adopted the entire program of his *Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel*, founded in 2004, and the web sites are linked to each other. There we read:

"We, Palestinian academics and intellectuals, call upon our colleagues in the international community *to comprehensively and consistently boycott all Israeli academic and cultural institutions.*"³⁵

In concrete terms, this means "to boycott and/or work towards the cancellation or annulment of events, activities, agreements, or projects that promote the normalization of Israel in the global academy, whitewash Israel's violations of international law and Palestinians rights, or violate the boycott."³⁶ The academic and cultural boycott targets university events, sports competitions, concerts and much more. The request, submitted by the Palestinian FIFA member, to exclude Israel from the World Soccer Association, has to be seen in this same context.

The academic, cultural and consumer boycott is intended to bring about the withdrawal of companies primarily from the West Bank ("Divestment"). In the long term, the movement strives with all aforementioned measures to achieve the last letter in the acronym BDS: International political sanctions against Israel. In an interview with the German journalist Tilo Jung in 2014, Barghouti explains: "Ultimately, that's the goal. We want sanctions imposed on Israel as was

³² International Court of Justice, Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Advisory Opinion, 2004, <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/131/1671.pdf>, last read on September 28, 2015.

³³ Rami Younis, Interview: The man behind the BDS Movement, +972mag, 14.06.2015, <http://972mag.com/interview-the-man-behind-the-bds-movement/107771/>, last read on September 28, 2015.

³⁴ Consumer Boycott, web site of the BDS Movement, loc. cit. (footnote 30).

³⁵ PACBI-Call for academic and cultural boycott of Israel, July 6, 2004, <http://pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=869>, last seen on September 28, 2015.

³⁶ Academic Boycott, web site of the BDS Movement, <http://www.bdsmovement.net/activecamps/academic-boycott>, last seen on September 28, 2015.

[sic] imposed against apartheid South Africa. That's why we are building a grass-roots movement from the bottom up, to pressure decision-makers."³⁷

In practice, the BDS boycott takes the form of separate, consecutive independent campaigns with individual objectives. For instance, past actions targeted the companies Caterpillar³⁸ and HeidelbergCement³⁹, who are accused by BDS of being complicit in Israeli occupation and alleged "apartheid." Other actions discouraged individual musicians from giving concerts in Israel.⁴⁰ The advantages of targeted campaigns in place of a continuous general boycott are clear: Focusing the activities of the BDS offshoots worldwide on a common pressure point maximizes the public effect of a boycott. Besides, individual campaigns give the movement the opportunity to react quickly and specifically to current developments. This allows a situational management of the effect of their activism. Moreover, the psychological influence of small successes on the organization should not be neglected.

The BDS Movement's only regular event is the *Israeli Apartheid Week*, organized worldwide every year by its national offshoots.⁴¹ In 2015, BDS representatives organized, among others, protest marches, film showings and public discussions at 112 sites in 27 countries. Frequent settings are university institutions, particularly for the numerous student organizations supporting BDS in the USA and UK. So far, Berlin has been the only German city to hold official events related to the Israeli Apartheid Week.⁴²

³⁷ Tilo Jung, Interview with Omar Barghouti, October 30, 2014, <https://krautreporter.de/75--wir-boykottieren-institutionen-die-mit-dem-apartheidsregime-gemeinsame-sache-machen>, last seen on September 28, 2015.

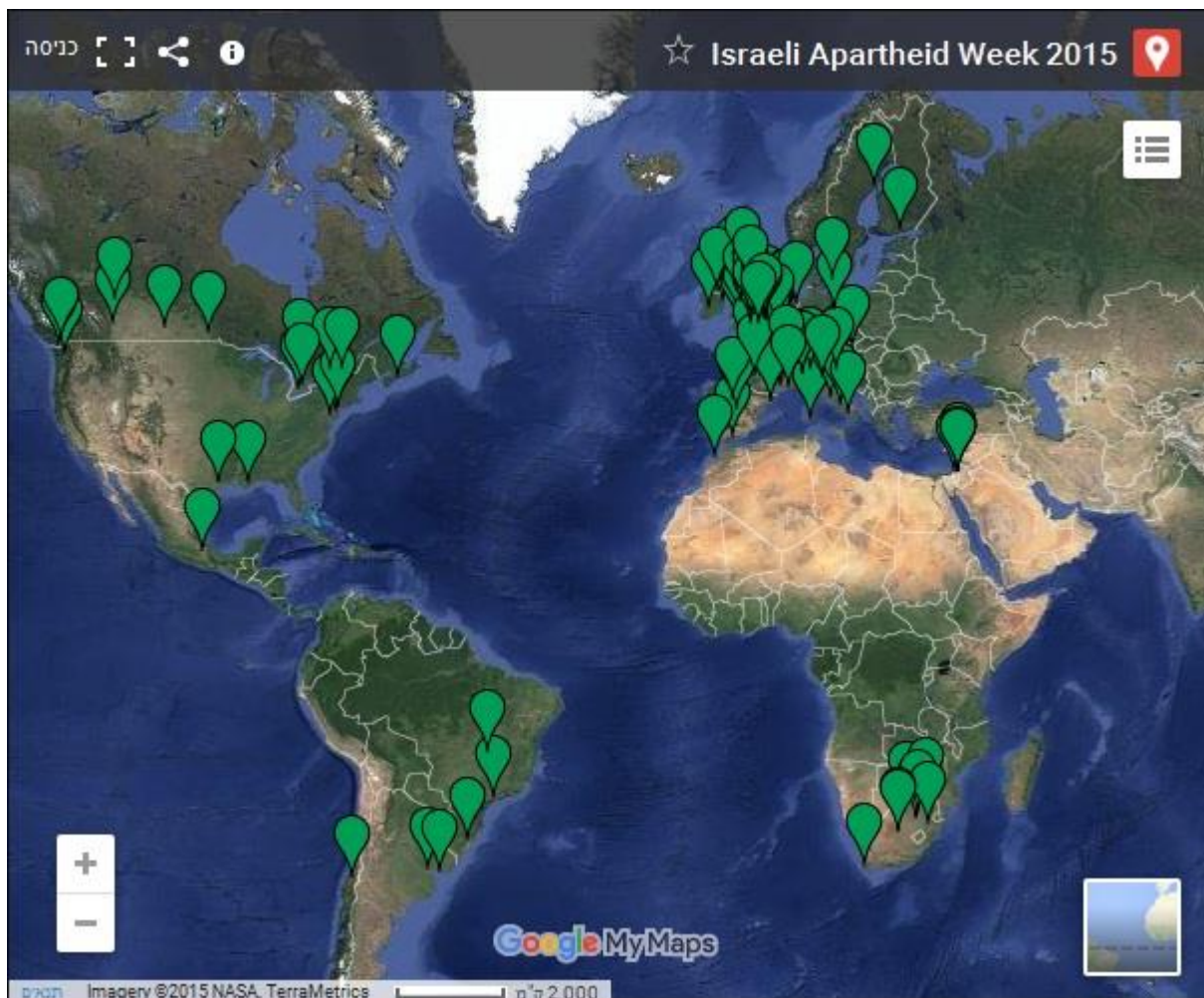
³⁸ <http://www.bdsmovement.net/tag/caterpillar>.

³⁹ <http://www.bdsmovement.net/tag/heidelbergcement>.

⁴⁰ Or Barnea, Snoop Dogg cancels Israeli gig, Ynetnews, July 23, 2008, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3572077,00.html>, last seen on September 28, 2015.

⁴¹ <http://apartheidweek.org/>.

⁴² <http://apartheidweek.org/events/>.



Event sites of the Israeli Apartheid Week 2015.⁴² No Arab city outside the Palestinian territories takes part. Almost without exception, the protest takes place in the Western world.

5. Organizational Structure

Although the boycott movement appears publicly under the name BDS Movement, it is not a conventional form of organization, comparable to the concept of a registered association. Consequently, the BDS has neither a member registry nor a Board or official contact person. In the end, "BDS" is nothing more than a freely available label, behind which defenders of the boycott of Israel worldwide are united. The actual managing body in the background is the BDS National Committee (BNC), founded in 2007 after the organization gradually gained a profile.⁴³ The committee is supported by 27 of the 171 NGOs that originally answered the boycott call in 2005 and is responsible for the strategic concept of the BDS Movement. In addition, it manages the public communication. BNC representatives categorically refuse to give interviews to Israeli media.⁴⁴

Little is known about the personnel structure of the BNC. The financial sources of the committee are completely unknown. The BNC does not maintain an official web site, instead

⁴³ Web site of the BDS Movement, Section „BNC“ <http://www.bdsmovement.net/bnc>.

⁴⁴ Rami Younis, Interview: The man behind the BDS Movement, loc. cit. (footnote 32).

explaining its function in a separate section on the BDS homepage. It did not respond to a request submitted by the Israel project bureau of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Liberty. Different people are identified as "spokesman" in the many press releases of the BNC, though no exact functional definition of this title is given. Nor can one find any information about the internal hierarchy. The functions of Omar Barghouti as the speaker and of Michael Deas as the committee's Coordinator for Europe are well known. Barghouti grants regular interviews on behalf of the BDS and BNC, gives presentations in the USA and UK and especially uses the new media to gain attention for the BDS. The co-founder of PACBI and BDS was born in Qatar and raised in Egypt and the USA.⁴⁵ He holds a master's degree in electrical engineering from Columbia University and received another master's degree in philosophy at Tel Aviv University.⁴⁶ He is still registered with the Israeli university, in spite of the fact that he founded the *Palestinian Campaign for the Cultural and Academic Boycott of Israel* (PACBI). Michael Deas' biography has even more Western influences. Alongside his job as the BNC's Coordinator in Europe, the British citizen, who lives in London, is the official representative of the European Coordination of Committees and Associations for Palestine (ECCP).⁴⁷ He began his studies at the London School of Economics in 2006.⁴⁸ Nowadays, Deas serves as a speaker for local BDS organizations, such as the "BDS Impulstagung" in Bonn, Germany, in March 2015⁴⁹, and regularly publishes new articles on the anti-Israel web site *Electronic Intifada*. Other names that appear in connection with the BNC are Mahmoud Nawajaa and Zeid al-Shuabi.⁵⁰

6. Consequences and Successes

In Israel:

Although the boycott did not have the effect intended by the Call for BDS on the overall economy of Israel, and hence on the government line, the movement did have a number of small successes in recent years. The BDS Movement's individual targeted campaigns, in particular, proved to be effective. The most recent example is the relocation of a production plant owned by the Israeli company SodaStream from the West Bank to the Negev desert. Following a boycott that the BDS Movement initiated in 2011 and continued over several years⁵¹, the company leadership of SodaStream announced in the fall of 2015 that it was going to close its manufacturing plant in Mischor Adumim.⁵² Prior to that, Palestinian and Israeli

⁴⁵ The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, The Role of the Palestinians in the BDS Campaign, July 29, 2015, http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/Data/articles/Art_20851/E_111_15_1445644924.pdf, last read on September 28, 2015.

⁴⁶ Canary Mission web site, <http://www.canarymission.org/omarbarghouti/>, last read on September 28, 2015.

⁴⁷ Profile for Michael Deas in his blog for Electronic Intifada, <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/michael-deas>, last read on September 28, 2015.

⁴⁸ <http://apartheidweek.org/events/>, loc. cit. (footnote 42).

⁴⁹ Video recording of Michael Deas' presentation during the "BDS Impulstagung" in Bonn, Germany, March 20, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3gvChjTJdaQ>, last watched on September 28, 2015.

⁵⁰ The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, The Role of the Palestinians in the BDS Campaign, loc. cit. (footnote 44).

⁵¹ <http://www.bdsmovement.net/tag/sodastream>.

⁵² Ilan Shavit, SodaStream Closes West Bank Factory to Move to Israel, Jewish Business News, September 10, 2015, <http://jewishbusinessnews.com/2015/09/10/sodastream-closes-west-bank-factory-to-move-to-israel/>, last seen on September 28, 2015.

employees had worked side by side in the plant located in the occupied territory. The plant closing puts the jobs of 1,300 employees at risk. Approximately 500 Palestinians who worked in Mischor Adumim for the same wages as their Israeli colleagues are facing unemployment.⁵³

The SodaStream case exposes a critical weak point in the BDS' arguments: Due to the interconnectedness of the Israeli and Palestinian economy, particularly in the West Bank, a boycott against Israel always affects the Palestinian society, which BDS claims to represent. As of 2010, Palestinian investment in Israel amounted to \$2.5 billion.⁵⁴ According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 96,000 of the 833,500 employed Palestinians, i.e. 11.5%, are working in Israel or Israeli settlements in the West Bank.⁵⁵ The boycott movement is therefore endangering the livelihood of more than one ninth of Palestinian workers. Palestinians employed by Israeli firms receive on average 2.2 times higher wages than those employed by Palestinian companies.⁵⁶ They also enjoy job security, as a result of benefits, insurance and legal protection – something that is not guaranteed in the territories under Palestinian authority control. But not only Palestinian workers are victims of the boycott – so are retailers whose offerings include Israeli products.



Israeli products in a Palestinian supermarket in the West Bank (Jericho).

⁵³ Israelische Firma schließt Fabrik in Siedlung, Handelsblatt, October 29, 2014, <http://www.handelsblatt.com/unternehmen/handel-konsumgueter/sodastream-israelische-firma-schliesst-fabrik-in-siedlung/10908592.html>, last read on September 28, 2015.

⁵⁴ Amira Hass, Study: Palestinians Invest Twice as Much in Israel as They Do in West Bank, Haaretz, November 22, 2011, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/features/study-palestinians-invest-twice-as-much-in-israel-as-they-do-in-west-bank-1.396979>, last read on September 28, 2015.

⁵⁵ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Participation, Employment, Unemployment and Average Daily Wage in NIS for Wage Employees in the Palestinian Territory by Governorate (ILO Standards), January – March, 2012, http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_Rainbow/Documents/Labor%20Force%20Annual.htm, last read on September 28, 2015.

⁵⁶ International Labour Office Geneva, The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories, 2014, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_242965.pdf.

What at first glance looks as if the boycott movement might be making the situation worse for itself, is in the eyes of the BDS a calculated success. To the BDS, Israel is strictly an occupying power and resistance to it is an ethical imperative. By this logic, Palestinians who do not participate in the boycott or even accept Israeli job offers are stigmatized as collaborators. Barghouti uses the support granted by 171 NGOs as a reason to present himself as spokesman for the entire Palestinian society. He discredits any contradiction to this as "colonialist."⁵⁷

In Europe and the USA:

The overwhelming part of the decentralized BDS Movement is active in Europe and the USA, organized mainly in academic institutions. In the UK, the *National Union of Students*, parent organization for about 600 British student associations, has supported BDS actively since 2015.⁵⁸ The Union represents the interests of several million students. The British *University and College Union*, with 116,000 members the worldwide largest association of academic teaching staff, is also pro-BDS. Smaller student associations in the USA participate in the boycott as well.⁵⁹

Since the BNC does not maintain a public register of student branches of the BDS at their respective universities, nobody can say with absolute certainty how widespread the movement actually is in Europe and the USA. In their *Campus Trends Report* for the academic year 2014–2015 the *Israel on Campus Coalition* has documented 1,630 anti-Israel events at 181 American colleges and universities.⁶⁰ In Europe, BDS is mostly active in Great Britain. During the conflict between Israel and Hamas in the summer of 2014, the German Socialist Student Union (Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund, SDS) co-organized demonstrations in Cologne and Berlin, which were dominated by anti-Israel and anti-Semitic slogans.⁶¹ Although individual campus groups repeatedly draw media attention, the academic boycott does not seem to be extensively rooted in the rest of Europe, nor in the USA.

In addition to boycotts conducted by private households and the BDS student movement, the labeling of goods produced in areas occupied by Israel is repeatedly playing a political role in Europe. Since the exclusive labeling of goods from the West Bank would be favorable to a boycott, European boycott groups had in the past demanded that the EU stipulate labeling regulations. In November 2014, the European Parliament invited ECCP Coordinator Michael

⁵⁷ Rami Younis, Interview: The man behind the BDS Movement, loc. cit. (footnote 32).

⁵⁸ Anshel Pfeffer, Britain's National Student Union Joins BDS Movement, Haaretz, June 2, 2015, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/.premium-1.659329>, last read on September 28, 2015.

⁵⁹ Kumars Salehi, BDS in the United States, January 26, 2015, Berkeley Journal of Sociology, <http://berkeleyjournal.org/2015/01/bds-in-the-united-states/>, last read on September 28, 2015.

⁶⁰ Israel on Campus Coalition, 2014–2015 Campus Trends Report, <http://israelcc.org/files/2015/08/ICC-2014-2015-Campus-Trends-Report1.pdf>, last read on September 28, 2015.

⁶¹ Ruhrbarone, Reports on pro- and anti-Israeli demos on the weekend of July 20, 2014, <http://www.ruhrbarone.de/berichte-von-pro-und-antiisraelischen-demonstrationen-am-wochenende/84590>; Linksjugend Solid, Für Frieden im Nahen Osten? – Report and Comment on the pro-Gaza rally near the Cologne Cathedral, July 21, 2014, <http://linksjugend-solid-koeln.blogspot.co.il/2014/07/fur-frieden-im-nahen-osten-bericht-und.html>, last read on September 28, 2015.

Deas to give a presentation in Brussels.⁶² After the European Court of Justice ruled in 2010 that products from the West Bank do not fall within the scope of the European-Israeli Trade Agreement, a clear majority in the European Parliament approved a non-binding labeling resolution.⁶³ However, this step does not go far enough for the BNC. In a press release, it reacted to the EU guidelines by demanding that EU member states implement a complete import ban on goods produced in the West Bank.⁶⁴ In doing so, the BNC is pressing on towards the last of the three demands in the BDS Movement's name: The introduction of general sanctions.

7. A Liberal Evaluation of the BDS Movement

The public presence of the BDS Movement reveals how closely it is aligned with the "Durban Strategy" modeled after the UN World Conference in 2001. Rhetorically as well as symbolically the BNC is painting the picture of an oppressed, disenfranchised Palestinian people on the one hand and a ruthless, dehumanizing Israeli occupation on the other. For instance, the recurring use of the term "apartheid" in the title of the Israel Apartheid Week leaves no room for another interpretation of Israel's and Palestine's role in the conflict. The absolute distinction between good and evil is for the BDS Movement a prerequisite for assuming the role of the morally superior mouthpiece for immobilized victims. This explains why the BDS describes the boycott in numerous instances as "moral duty," while attributing "ethical isolation" to Israel.⁶⁵ The Call for Boycott is directed towards "conscientious" and "people of conscience all over the world."⁶⁶ The movement's logo is emblazoned with the three loaded catchwords "Freedom," "Justice" and "Equality."⁶⁷ It is important to examine the extent to which the BDS Movement's actions live up to its chosen appearance.

Nowhere does the boycott movement offer a concrete definition of "freedom" or "justice." Only "equality" is mentioned in at least one instance of the Call for BDS. In its second demand the movement calls for "Recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality."⁶⁸ It is undisputed that there are cases of unacceptable daily discrimination on both sides of the conflict, on a personal level and caused by arbitrary use of power by civil servants. On a legal level, however, all Israeli citizens are already enjoying the same legally enforceable rights regardless of their origin, religion or skin color. And this

⁶² European Coordination of Committees and Associations for Palestine, EU involvement in illegal Israeli settlements – ECCP's presentation in European Parliament, November 29, 2013, <http://www.eccpalestine.org/eu-involvement-in-illegal-israeli-settlements-eccps-presentation-in-european-parliament/>, last read on September 28, 2015.

⁶³ Itamar, Eichner, EU: Landslide vote for West Bank product labeling, Ynetnews, September 10, 2015, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4699850,00.html>, last read on September 28, 2015.

⁶⁴ BNC Statement, September 7, 2015, <http://www.bdsmovement.net/2015/eu-labelling-of-israeli-colonies-products-is-hardly-enough-to-bring-about-european-compliance-with-international-law-13277>, last read on September 28, 2015.

⁶⁵ Cultural Boycott section of the BDS web site, <http://www.bdsmovement.net/activecamps/cultural-boycott>, last read on September 28, 2015.

⁶⁶ Call for BDS, loc. cit. (footnote 12).

⁶⁷ Web site of the BDS Movement, Section "BNC", loc. cit. (footnote 42).

⁶⁸ Call for BDS, loc. cit. (footnote 12).

represents the crucial difference to the historic apartheid era in South Africa with its legitimized segregation of citizens belonging to a particular segment of the population.

Moreover, according to the Rome Statute for the establishment of the International Criminal Court, which was signed by the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), "apartheid" is a legally defined term. Its interpretation, however, is different from the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid adopted in 1973, which is often cited in the Palestinian territories. So far, there is no judgment by the International Criminal Court that recognizes a policy of apartheid by the State of Israel. Therefore, the accusation made by the BDS Movement is not objectively tenable – the Israeli government's actions do not have the characteristics of apartheid, neither in historic nor in juristic terms. By calling for equal rights, the boycott movement is implicitly making false claims in order to justify demands that are meant to suggest a structural similarity between BDS and the historic resistance against apartheid in South Africa. In fact, the movement's Call for BDS explicitly refers three times to the fight against South-African apartheid, which it considers its "inspiration."⁶⁹

Aligning itself with the tradition of the African-American Civil Rights Movement, according to BDS another source of inspiration for its activism⁷⁰, the boycott supporters are constantly emphasizing the non-violent and peaceful expression of their "resistance." The program objective of the BDS Movement, which attacks Israel as a whole and provides for a one-state solution, falls outside of the framework of a vision that can be implemented by peaceful means. For instance, the "right of return" demanded by the BDS⁷¹ for roughly five million Palestinian refugees – of whom the absolute majority of 99% has not personally acquired refugee status on the grounds of displacement or exodus, but rather inherited it – would mean the end of the Jewish State of Israel.⁷² The two-state solution pursued by the Oslo Peace Process is undermined by the BDS, not only by the movement's rejection – reflected in its actions – of Israel's right to exist. Another factor is that the internationalization of the conflict – BDS focuses its activities on Europe and the USA – contradicts the 1993 and 1994 Oslo Agreements. Until today, the Agreements represent the most recent successful peace negotiations between the representatives of Israel and those of the Palestinian territories. Thus, breaking down the successes in Oslo also means a setback on the road to a mutually agreeable solution to the Middle East Conflict. This is the reason why even the Palestinian Authority, the only officially recognized political representation of the Palestinian people, is publicly opposed to BDS.⁷³ In spite of its non-violent instruments, the boycott movement is an obstacle to peace because of its intransigent intentions. Moreover, it spreads false information about Israel as an apartheid

⁶⁹ Call for BDS, loc. cit. (footnote 12).

⁷⁰ Statement on the BDS web site, August 25, 2015, <http://www.bdsmovement.net/2015/palestinian-boycott-activists-salute-the-1000-black-activists-scholars-and-artists-for-endorsing-bds-13262>, last read on September 28, 2015.

⁷¹ Call for BDS, loc. cit. (footnote 12).

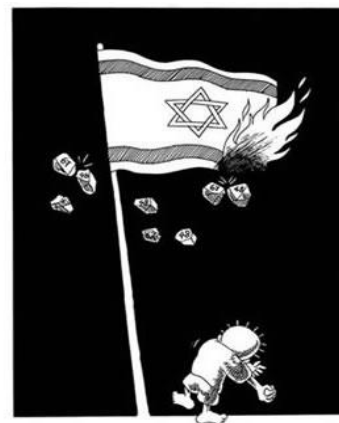
⁷² UNRWA web site, <http://www.unrwa.org/palestine-refugees>; Ari Ben Goldberg, US Senate dramatically scales down definition of Palestinian 'refugees', The Times of Israel, May 25, 2012 <http://www.timesofisrael.com/us-senate-dramatically-redefines-definition-of-palestinian-refugees/>, last read on September 28, 2015.

⁷³ Jake Wallis Simons, Why even the Palestinian Authority opposes the boycott of Israel, June 9, 2014, <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/jakewallissimons/100275416/israels-enemies-are-dealt-a-heavy-blow-by-the-palestinian-authority/>, last read on September 28, 2015.

state, thus preventing an expedient discussion on the substance. The seemingly pacifist rhetoric of the BDS Movement conceals its true motivation: Isolating Israel with the goal of ending its existence.

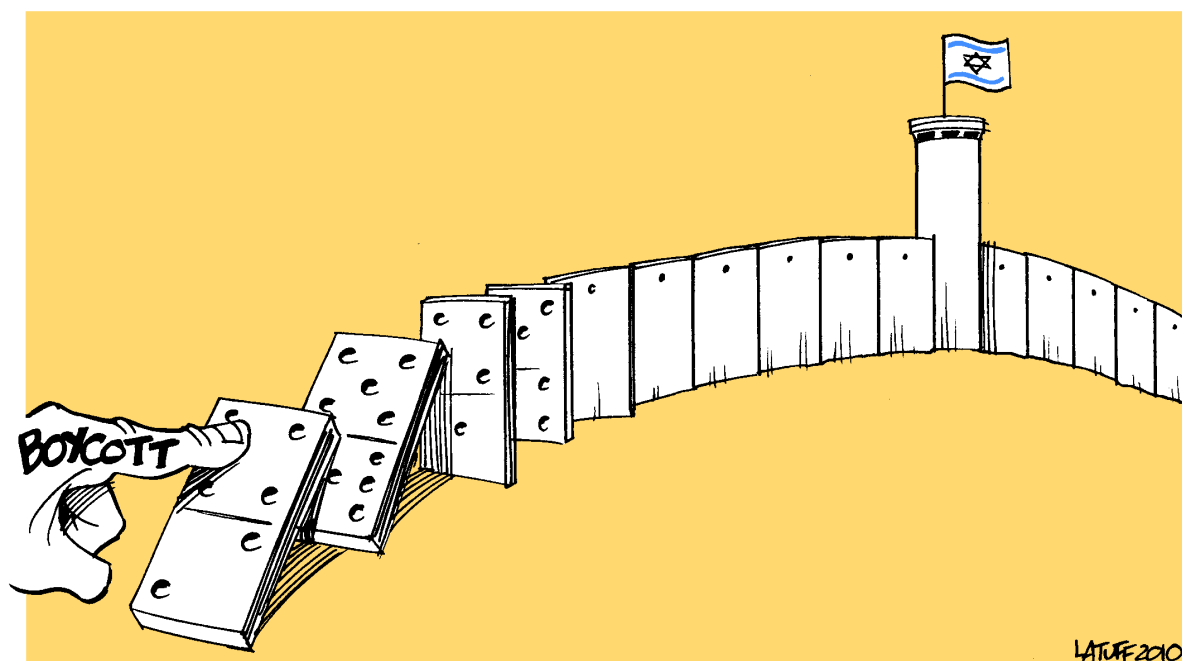
Boycott *per se* is primarily an unbiased instrument, neither good nor bad, and must be evaluated specific to the situation by analyzing its intentions and consequences. The BDS Movement cannot be compared to the African-American Civil Rights Movement or the Anti-Apartheid Movement in South Africa because ideologically it is itself becoming an aggressor, is acting in a libelous way and has no grounds for a boycott against all of Israel based on allegations of unequal treatment. While sanctions against the South African apartheid regime contributed to an increase in liberty and civil rights in the long run, the BDS Movement's intentions and the consequences of the boycott are jeopardizing these very values. The movement's anti-Israel intentions, in the long term, are an obstacle to peace. The boycott's effect is already leading to unemployment and loss of welfare, including for Palestinians. BDS is not the advocate for "freedom," "justice," and "equality" that it purports to be.

On the rhetorical as well as the symbolic level it becomes clear that the boycott movement's claim and actual mindset are not in line with each other. The BDS Movement's logo features the drawing of a Palestinian boy in tattered clothes, seen from the back, who is holding scales in his hands. The symbolism is clear and identical with BDS' verbal messages: The Palestinian side in the conflict is presented as financially inferior, innocent as children and unable to act. Only moral law, embodied by the scales, is on its side. A search for its origin reveals that the drawing of the boy is a symbol created by the artist Naji al-Ali, first published in 1969 and widely known in Palestinian society. The drawing is entitled *Handala*. Handala represents the *Nakba*, the exodus of the Palestinian people during the founding war of 1947, which was understood as a flight from attacked Israelis. The original drawings by al-Ali reflect unmistakable hostility towards Israel and Jews. Anti-Americanism is another frequent element in the Handala motif. Several original graphics show Handala not as the innocent, passive observer personified by the BDS logo, but a fighter who is throwing stones at a burning Israeli flag. Stylistically, the representations of Jews in cartoons are strongly reminiscent of the caricatures in the national-socialist newspaper *Der Stürmer*. Both the BDS Movement's rhetoric and its logo reveal only at second glance that it actually does not pursue peaceful objectives.



Handala in the logo of the BDS Movement and in an original drawing by Naji al-Ali.

The numerous protest channels promoted by the BDS Movement can be subdivided into two categories: political and private. The personal boycott of products, events, and science moves the confrontation from the level of classical diplomacy to civil society. This changes the conflict from a political to a private issue. Whereas the boycott once was government-led and externalized through the Arab League's bans, the goal now is to socially internalize it. The power to enforce it lies not with the executive, but rather the individual. And the boycott today is not driven by political decree, but by discrediting the opponent on moral grounds. The boycott movement is totalitarian because it extends the boycott against Israel to all areas of life, does not distinguish between the State of Israel and Israeli society, and – through its academic boycott – divides unbiased scientific progress into moral categories of "good" and "bad." BDS is opposed geographically to Israel as a whole and culturally to everything Israeli. Only on the surface does the modern boycott movement aim at damaging Israel economically by refusing to cooperate. The Jewish state has always absorbed the economic consequences of the anti-Israel boycott. Instead, the movement's motivation lies in denigrating Israel's image in the uninvolved world community by mounting a meticulously planned and by now well-established, reflex-like campaign. BDS wants to reach minds, not cash registers. The boycott organizers have understood that long-term political transformation must be preceded by social paradigm change. The BDS Movement intends to get the ball rolling through its final goal of pulling the rug from under the State of Israel.



Graphic on the BDS web site.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ <http://www.bdsmovement.net/bdsintro>.