

## DIVESTMENT AND BOYCOTT PEACEFUL WAYS YOU CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

*For the past several decades, the Israeli government has continuously violated United Nations resolutions and international humanitarian law. Palestinians who remained in Israel after 1948—when 75% fled—live as third-class citizens, facing legal, economic, and social discrimination. In the occupied territories, Israel continues to subject the Palestinians there to home demolitions, closures and checkpoints, extrajudicial detentions and assassinations, immobilizing curfews, and countless other daily abuses and forms of oppression. The system of apartheid that Israel has developed closely resembles that which South Africa once had. Apartheid in South Africa was eventually abolished in large part because of an international grassroots movement to stop financial support of the apartheid regime. Through divestment (stopping capital investment in companies that do business in Israel) and boycott (not buying Israeli products) we can bring justice to the Israelis and Palestinians as well. The following questions can help you as you decide to join this growing movement:*

### **What are the goals of this divestment/ boycott campaign?**

The divestment/boycott campaign seeks to build a peaceful, international, grassroots movement that will pressure companies to withdraw their investments from Israel. This withdrawal, along with a consumer boycott of Israeli products, will eventually isolate Israel economically and diplomatically, pressuring Israel to live up to its obligations under international law. The campaign will help dismantle Israel's apartheid system under which Palestinians live and end the construction of "colonies" in the occupied Palestinian territories. It will pressure the U.S. government to transform its Middle East policy from one that is biased and destructive to one that seeks genuine justice and peace for both the Israeli and Palestinian people. Eventually Israeli citizens themselves will realize that maintaining the occupation and racial discrimination against Palestinians is morally abhorrent and an economic drain on Israel. The campaign will end when Palestinians are finally allowed the rights of freedom and self-determination, when Palestinians inside Israel are given equal civil rights, when there is a just solution for the five million Palestinian refugees who wish, and have the right, to return home, and when there is equality, peace and security for all people of the region.

### **Can divestment from Israel be called anti-Semitic?**

*Absolutely not.*

Anti-Semitism goes against the very principles that are the foundation of this movement: justice, equality, human rights, and peace for *all* peoples. *It is important to separate Israeli policies from the Jewish people in Israel and abroad, many of whom support divestment.* Divestment and boycott campaigns target Israeli, not Jewish, products. The campaign also targets American-owned companies that do business in Israel and fund the occupation, but it is not anti-American. Charges of anti-Semitism are poor attempts to distract from the real problem: Israel's apartheid.

### **Why are we singling out Israel? What about all of the other countries that abuse human rights?**

Should we have refrained from challenging apartheid South Africa because there were abuses throughout the world? Of course not! There are many compelling similarities between Israel and apartheid-era South Africa. In apartheid-era South Africa, only whites had full rights. In Israel, Palestinian citizens may vote and run for office, but only Jews have full rights to obtain land, receive military veteran benefits, and immigrate under "the Law of Return." Palestinians in the occupied territories are subject to Israeli rule without any democratic voting rights even though they pay Israeli taxes. Apartheid rulers transferred black

South Africans to “Bantustans,” which were nominally autonomous, but weak, black “homelands,” with the intent of isolating them from the rest of the country. Similarly, Israel is building Jewish-only settlements or “colonies” across the Palestinian territories, cutting off access between cities with checkpoints and Jewish-only roads. Israel is now building a massive cement wall that will completely encircle the major areas of the West Bank. This is a physical manifestation of Israel’s apartheid policies.

### **Aren’t both the Israelis and Palestinians committing violence?**

While both sides have been inexcusably violent towards each other, there are key distinctions between the two sides. First, Israel is the occupier and aggressor in this conflict, and it has inflicted tremendous pain and desperation upon the Palestinian people. There is no moral symmetry between the violence that the occupier (Israel) commits and the violence that the oppressed (the Palestinians) commit. Palestinian acts of violence must be judged in the context of Israel’s decades of aggression, dispossession, and oppression of the entire Palestinian people. We must remember that the black African National Congress (ANC) also used violence in its struggle against the white government. Second, there is an incredible power difference between Israel and the Palestinians that clearly shows this is not a conflict between two equal parties. Israel is the “superpower” in this conflict. Israel’s highly advanced and well-trained military, funded primarily by US taxpayers, is the fourth-strongest on the planet. Israel is a recognized state with one of the most developed economies in the world, and still receives billions of dollars in aid annually from the United States. Palestinians, on the other hand, have no recognized state, no military or advanced weaponry, a weak economy dependent on Israel, and soaring unemployment. Palestinians live under Israeli rule, which restricts their travel and often confines them to their homes. As an occupying power, Israel has a responsibility to follow international law, particularly the fourth Geneva Convention, and provide for the civilians

under its rule. Israel has clearly failed in that duty, and thus the international community must bring justice to the Palestinians.

### **Is the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip necessary to maintain Israeli security?**

No. If Israel were truly occupying these areas to provide security for Israel proper, it would not be allowing and encouraging civilians settlers to move into the region. Throughout the 1990s, Israel continued to construct permanent “colonies” in the Palestinian territories (even though the Oslo agreements between the two parties forbid it). These Israeli “colonists” actually create more of a security risk; many are considered right-wing fanatics by most of their countrymen, and they aggravate the conflict by carrying machine guns, uprooting Palestinian orchards, and harassing Palestinian in their neighbor-hoods and markets. Palestinians are banned from the colonists’ communities. The hopelessness and resentment that Israel has created through this apartheid and colonization policy continue to create a greater security risk for Israel.

### **How does investing in Israel relate to the policies of occupation and apartheid?**

Some investments have very direct links to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and the oppression of the Palestinian people. For example, Caterpillar bulldozers are routinely used to demolish Palestinian homes, often killing inhabitants inside. A young American peace activist was recently murdered by an Israeli soldier when she was run over by a Caterpillar bulldozer. Other connections are less apparent but crucial nonetheless. Hewlett Packard, for example, owns part of the Technion Institute in Israel, a prestigious college that discriminates against Arab students, admitting a disproportionately high number of Jewish students and very few Arab students, who are also citizens of Israel. It also develops high-tech weaponry for the Israeli military. Even seemingly innocuous investments in Israel are actually funding the violation of fundamental Palestinian human rights.