

Stop the Jewish National Fund (JNF); Help dismantle a colonial pillar of the Israeli Apartheid regime

The Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions National Committee (BNC) is a wide coalition of the largest Palestinian mass organizations, trade unions, networks and organizations.

Member organizations:

Council of National and Islamic Forces in Palestine
Gen. Union of Palestinian Workers
Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions
Palestinian NGO Network (PNGO)
Palestinian Nat'l Institute for NGOs
Federation of Indep. Trade Unions
Global Palestine Right of Return Coalition
Occupied Palestine and Syrian Golan Heights Initiative
Gen. Union of Palestinian Women
Union of Palestinian Farmers
Grassroots Palestinian Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign (STW)
Nat'l Committee for Grassroots Resistance
Pal. Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI)
Nat'l Committee to Commemorate the Nakba
Civic Coalition for the Defense of Palestinian Rights in Jerusalem
Coalition for Jerusalem
Union of Pal. Charitable Organizations
Palestinian Economic Monitor
Union of Youth Activity Centers-Palestine Refugee Camps
Union of Professional Associations

Occupied Palestine, March 26th 2011 – Commemorating the Palestinian Land Day and the Global BDS Day of Action¹, the Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions National Committee (BNC), on behalf of its constituent organizations and unions representing the majority of Palestinian civil society, together with many partners around the world, particularly the International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network (IJAN) and the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign, is hereby officially launching an international campaign to Stop the Jewish National Fund (JNF) and strip it of its charity status everywhere. The BNC calls on people of conscience around the world to take civil and legal steps to oppose the presence and activities of the JNF in their countries due to its long-standing and intricate role in crimes of colonization, ethnic cleansing and apartheid against the Palestinian people. As a key pillar in Israel's system of occupation, settler-colonialism and apartheid, the JNF should lose its charitable status anywhere; it should also be comprehensively boycotted by international civil society and by governments that consistently uphold the primacy of international law.

Established in 1901 with the primary objective to “purchase, take on lease or in exchange or otherwise acquire lands...in the prescribed region [Palestine and the surrounding areas]...for the purpose of settling Jews on such lands”,² the JNF (also known as Keren Kayemeth L'Yisrael or KKL)³ has been a chief partner in the Zionist colonial drive to dispossess indigenous Palestinians of their land, culminating in the Nakba of 1948 when Zionist militias and later Israel expelled a majority of the Palestinian population in order to establish a state with a Jewish majority. Shortly after the Nakba, the government of Israel transferred the ownership of lands from 372 of the 522 ethnically cleansed Palestinian villages to the JNF-KKL in order to hold them "in the name of the Jewish people in perpetuity" and prevent the return of the rightful Palestinian owners.

Since the 1950s, when Israel institutionalized its policies of ethnic cleansing and colonization, the JNF-KKL has formed a pillar of Israel's apartheid over the Palestinian people. Granted public status under Israeli law,⁴ the JNF-KKL – an organization mandated to exclusively serve Jewish interests – has since held an influential position in the Israel Lands Authority (ILA), the official body responsible for the administration of all public land in Israel. All told, the JNF-KKL's position and role means that Palestinian citizens of Israel are effectively barred from owning or leasing around 93% of the lands in Israel.⁵

¹ BNC Statement on Land Day (2009) <http://www.bdsmovement.net/?q=node/353>

² Quoted in Walter Lehn, *The Jewish National Fund*, London: Kegan Paul International, 1988, p.32-33

³ In Hebrew, Keren Kayemet L'Yisrael (KKL) [literally, the 'Perpetual Fund for Israel.' In some states, JNF affiliate organizations use this name instead of JNF.

⁴ *World Zionist Organization-Jewish Agency "Status" Law (1952); Jewish National Fund Law (1953)*

⁵ Mahajneh, A (2010), Al Majdal, *The Jewish National Fund* (Winter-Spring 2010), p.31.

For over a century to this day, the JNF-KKL has thus been at the forefront of aiding and abetting the forcible expulsion of Palestinians from their lands. The JNF-KKL supports Israel in ejecting Palestinians from their homes, denying them access to it and working diligently to destroy the evidence, mainly by planting trees on top of and around ethnically cleansed villages to literally disappear them. These well documented crimes would not have been possible without the stream of external funding and political support, in particular from private entities in the US and Europe, or the political cover from governments that turn a blind eye to the JNF's activities on their soil, often in violation of the country's domestic laws. As with apartheid South Africa, Israeli apartheid can only end when the structures sustaining it are exposed and dismantled, JNF being its archetypal representation.

Over time, the JNF-KKL has developed a number of ways to re-brand itself and present its support for ethnic cleansing and apartheid in a more positive light. These include efforts at 'green-washing' Israeli Apartheid by deceptively promoting itself as an environmental organization which realizes the deeply racist Zionist myth of "making the desert bloom", whilst in reality planting non-native pines which destroy indigenous vegetation and pursuing other activities which negatively affect the local environment.⁶

As Palestinian displacement and dispossession continues, so does the JNF-KKL's role. Of the many areas in which the JNF-KKL is busy at work, its actions in the Naqab (Negev) desert in Southern Israel and its US\$600 million project to settle 250,000 Jewish settlers on the land is the most horrific.⁷ The majority of the Naqab's Bedouin Palestinian inhabitants were evicted in 1948; most of their land was confiscated by the Israeli state, and some of it was transferred to the JNF-KKL. Since then Palestinians in the area have been forced into ever-smaller "concentration towns," resembling the reservations for native communities in North America, or into "unrecognized villages," the existence of which the State refuses to recognize and to which no water, electricity, schooling or other public service are provided. The JNF-KKL's most disturbing project in the area, "God's TV Forest" funded by an Evangelical organization that believes that "greening the land" will bring about the End Times, is being planted on the land of the Palestinian Bedouin village of Al Araqib which has been destroyed more than 20 times since June 2010.

On the occasion of Palestinian Land Day and the Global BDS Day of Action on 30 March, the BNC calls upon conscientious people and organizations worldwide to expose the JNF's crimes against the Palestinian people and to implement boycotts and legal action against the JNF wherever it operates.

Join the "Stop the JNF" campaign⁸: <http://www.stopthejnf.org/>

⁶ Blumenthal, M. *The Carmel Wildfire is burning all illusions in Israel*, 2011, Electronic Intifada.

⁷ <http://www.jnf.org/work-we-do/blueprint-negev/>

⁸ The Stop the JNF Campaign, established by a coalition of solidarity organizations around the world including Palestinian and Israeli groups, aims to expose the JNF's violations of Palestinian rights and international law, promote civil and legal challenges to the JNF throughout Europe, the Americas and Australasia, seeking to annul the JNF's charitable privileges and tax-exempt fundraising, and have JNF offices world-wide shut down. The BNC views this campaign with utter interest, as it is well justified, well thought-out, as well as has every potential to succeed and, as a result, to play a key role in dismantling the racist structures of apartheid that have been imposed on Palestinians for over 60 years.