



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

BNC member organizations:

Council of National and Islamic Forces in Palestine

Palestinian NGO Network (PNGO)

Palestinian Nat'l Institute for NGOs

Global Palestine Right of Return Coalition

Palestinian Trade Union Coalition for BDS (PTUC-BDS)

Federation of Indep. Trade Unions

Gen. Union of Palestinian Workers

Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions

Gen. Union of Palestinian Women

Union of Palestinian Farmers

Gen. Union of Palestinian Teachers

Gen. Union of Palestinian Writers

Palestinian Federation of Unions of University Professors and Employees (PFUUEP)

Union of Professional Associations

Gen. Union of Palestinian Peasants

Union of Public Employees in Palestine-Civil Sector

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

Occupied Palestine and Syrian Golan Heights Initiative

BDS at 7!

Celebrating, reflecting and further mainstreaming

Occupied Palestine, 9 July 2012 – Seven years after the Palestinian civil society call for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel was launched, the global BDS campaign has become stronger, more widespread, more effective and certainly more diverse than ever—a true cause for celebration by all those groups and conscientious citizens of the world who contributed to this success. However, Israel's intensifying violations of international law and basic Palestinian rights, the direct threat Israel poses to the freedom of peoples across the region, and the impunity that Israel still enjoys are cause for reflection and the continuous fine-tuning of our strategies to further spread BDS and further isolate Israel as a world pariah, just as South Africa was under apartheid.

Thanks to the BDS movement, the struggle for the basic rights of the entire Palestinian people has taken a major leap during these last seven years, reaching wide audiences and achieving concrete achievements in major European countries, South Africa, Latin America, India, the Arab world, Australia, New Zealand and even North America. Following on from a similar [round up published to mark five years of BDS](#), the [Palestinian BDS National Committee](#), the broad Palestinian civil society coalition, has put together the following selection of highlights gives a taste of the spectacular growth of BDS over the last two years.

The global reach of the BDS movement is maybe best highlighted by this year's edition of the BDS Global Day of Action which [took place in 23 countries](#) and the [fact that the 8th annual Israeli Apartheid Week \(IAW\)](#) was organized this year on campuses in [202 cities across the world](#), causing near panic in the Israeli public diplomacy ministry, which scrambled [100 envoys](#) to counter IAW around the world.

Popular **consumer boycotts** of Israeli products and campaigns against companies that export and sell Israeli products, particularly those implicated in Israel's illegal colonies in the occupied Palestinian territory, have not only raised awareness among ordinary citizens in countless cities across the world but led to significant damage to complicit Israeli companies:

- Agrexco, Israel's former largest exporter of agricultural produce, [entered liquidation](#) towards the end of 2011, following a campaign of blockades, demonstrations, lobbying of supermarkets and governments, popular boycotts and legal action in more than 13 countries across Europe. The campaign

against the company was a major factor behind the lack of investors' interest to salvage it.

- The largest Co-operative in Europe, the Co-Operative Group in the UK, [introduced a policy](#) to end trade with companies that source products from Israel's illegal settlements, following a determined campaign by Co-Op members. Campaigners are working to pressure other supermarkets to adopt a similarly [comprehensive position](#). Many supermarkets across Europe already claim not to sell produce from illegal settlements.

- A sustained campaign against Ahava, the Israeli cosmetics company situated in an illegal Israeli colony, forced the company to [close its flagship London store](#) and retailers in the [UK](#), [Norway](#), [Japan](#) and [Canada](#) to announce boycotts of the company.

Inspired by the integral role that Israeli academic institutions play in developing the knowledge and technology behind Israeli occupation, colonization and apartheid, and planning and justifying Israel's worst crimes, **academic boycott** campaigns have spread to campuses across the world:

- Setting a worldwide precedent for the academic boycott of Israel, [the University of Johannesburg severed ties with Israel's Ben-Gurion University](#) in 2011, following a campaign backed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and over 400 South African academics.

- Campaigns against EU-funded collaboration with private Israeli companies and Israeli universities have sprung up at campuses across Europe in response to a [call from Palestinian academics and civil society](#).

- Academic unions in the [UK](#) and [Canada](#) have voted to support various academic boycott campaign initiatives. There are also active academic boycott campaigns in [India](#), the US, South Africa, Ireland, Chile, Brazil, Pakistan, and in many European countries.

Rapidly losing support around the world and recently again voted one of the [most negatively viewed countries in the world](#), Israel's attempts to whitewash its system of colonization, occupation and apartheid using culture is increasingly thwarted by a highly visible **cultural boycott**:

- [Scores of artists](#) -- especially musicians and filmmakers -- and writers have refused to perform in Israel or cancelled scheduled performances following pressure from the BDS movement including Bono, Snoop Dogg, Jean Luc Godard, Elvis Costello, Gil Scott Heron, Carlos Santana, Devendra Banhart, Faithless, the Pixies, Cassandra Wilson, Cat Power, Zakir Hussain.

- Many artists and other cultural figures now speak publicly of their support for BDS: [Roger Waters](#), [Alice Walker](#), Naomi Klein, John Berger, Judith Butler, Etienne Balibar, Ken Loach, Arundhati Roy, Angela Davis, Sarah Schulman, among others.

- Israeli artists who accept funding from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are required to [sign a contract](#) committing them to be part of Israel's cultural public relations offensive. Protests and campaigns against state-backed performances -- such as those by the Batsheva dance company, the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, Habima theater, and the Jerusalem Quartet -- are now common place in Europe and North

America, forcing some cultural venues to defend or retract their decision to host representatives of Israel and persuading others not to invite state-backed Israeli artists at all.

In the related field of **sports boycott**:

- The inspiring [93 day hunger strike](#) by imprisoned Palestinian national football team player Mahmoud Sarsak, who was detained and subsequently held without trial by Israel in 2009 while attempting to leave Gaza to play an international match was met with [calls for his release by footballing superstars](#) and FIFA, the international football federation. Sports clubs in Gaza and footballing legend Eric Cantona have criticized the European football association for [awarding Israel the right to host the 2013 under-21 football tournament](#).

- [The Egypt Football Association announced that its national teams would no longer wear Adidas kit](#) over the company's [sponsorship of an Israeli marathon that violates international law](#) and whitewashes Israel's illegal occupation of Jerusalem. Calls for boycotting Adidas were issued by the Council of Arab Sports Ministers and by the Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC).

- US basketball legend Kareem Abdul-Jabbar [cancelled](#) a scheduled public visit to Israel.

Corporations, both Israeli and international, play a key role in facilitating Israeli apartheid. **Divestment** campaigns are raising the price of corporate complicity with Israeli violations of international law and changing corporate attitudes towards doing business with Israel:

- French multinational Veolia has been targeted since November 2008 due its [provision of infrastructure services to illegal settlements](#), including the Jerusalem Light Rail. Local municipalities across Europe and Australia have decided not to award Veolia contracts [worth at least \\$14 billion](#) following BDS campaigns. An increasing number of municipal authorities have implemented policies excluding Veolia from bidding on local contracts. Several European [banks have divested](#) from the company as well. Veolia has been forced to admit the damage the BDS campaign has caused it and subsequently announced plans to withdraw from some illegal Israeli projects.

- Several European banks have [also divested from Alstom](#), one of Veolia's partners in the Jerusalem Light Rail. Alstom [lost a \\$10 billion contract](#) to build the second phase of the Saudi Haramain Railway project following a concerted campaign of pressure.

- Following a concerted campaign in the US, Caterpillar was [removed](#) from MSCI-ESG, an influential ethical investment index over the use of its bulldozers and equipment to destroy Palestinian homes. This led to [TIAA-CREF, the US pension fund giant targeted by a wide US civil society coalition, removing the company from its Social Choice Funds](#).

- The European Parliament [elected not to renew a contract with G4S](#) following action by Palestine solidarity groups. G4S is a private security company that Palestinian civil society has [called for action](#) against over its contract with the Israeli Prison Service and its resulting complicity with the detention of Palestinian political prisoners.

- The Norwegian government pension fund and 12 other European finance institutions have [excluded Elbit Systems](#) from their portfolios. Elbit is an Israeli military company involved in constructing Israel's illegal wall.

Responding to ever-increasing public anger with Israel's occupation and denial of basic Palestinian rights, a number of governments have started to introduce **sanctions** against Israel:

- [Turkey](#) and [Norway](#) have both announced decisions to suspend military relations with Israel and Turkey is pursuing legal action against Israel over its killing of 9 Turkish citizens on the Freedom Flotilla in 2010. Bolivia, Venezuela, Qatar, Mauritania and several other countries also took action in response to the attack.

- [A call from Palestinian civil society for a comprehensive military embargo on Israel](#) last July was supported by Nobel Peace Prize winners Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Mairead Maguire, Betty Williams and Adolfo Pérez Esquivel and civil society groups around the world representing millions of people.

The campaign to [Stop the JNF](#) has gone from strength to strength, forcing the leaders of all of the major UK political parties, including Prime Minister David Cameron, to [end their patronage of the organization](#), successfully persuading the authorities in the [Swiss town of Geneva to disassociate the city from the JNF](#) and winning support of numerous mainstream organizations.

In the **trade union** movement, labor-led sanctions and BDS initiatives have become the leading form of solidarity with the Palestinian struggle:

- BDS principles and tactics have been [formally endorsed](#) by national trade union federations in South Africa, UK, Scotland, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Belgium, the Basque Country, Brazil and other countries across Latin America, in addition to scores of national and local unions. [Africa's largest trade union federation, ITUC-Africa](#) – representing 15 million workers from 56 African trade union federations has endorsed BDS and the European Trade Union Congress is currently taking action against produce from illegal Israeli settlements.

- Trade unions are initiating [concrete campaigns and actions](#), such as [the heroic blockades of Israeli ships](#) by dockworkers in South Africa, Sweden, and California, and the campaigns by the London region of the [UK Rail, Maritime and Transport union against Alstom](#), due to its complicity with an illegal occupation infrastructure project, and by the [Norwegian Union of Municipal and General Employees \(Fagforbundet\) against Ahava](#) and other companies complicit with Israeli violations of international law.

- Some major trade unions, particularly in Europe, are taking steps to sever links with the Histadrut, the colonial Israeli trade union entity that has always played a key role in Israel's system of oppression over the Palestinian people. Most recently, Unison, the UK's second largest trade union with 1.3 million members, [voted to reaffirm its position of suspended relations with the Histadrut](#).

Following a call for concrete solidarity from Palestinian Christians entitled Kairos Palestine, **churches around the world** have adopted BDS-related actions:

- In the US, the Quaker Friends Fiduciary Corporation (FFC) [divested](#) \$900,000 in shares of Caterpillar, targeted over its sale of bulldozers to Israel that are used to violate Palestinian rights. The [worldwide United Methodist Church](#) and the [Presbyterian Church in the US](#) have both called on their members to boycott produce from illegal Israeli settlements.

- In the UK, the [Methodist Church](#) and the [Quakers in Britain](#) recently called on the UK government to ban trade in products from illegal Israeli settlements.

At university campuses across the world, the **student movement** in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle continues to rapidly emerge:

- In North America, students are developing sophisticated and widely supported campus divestment initiatives, with student unions in [Regina](#) and [Carleton](#) in Canada and [National Movimiento Estudiantil Chican@ de Aztlán \(M.E.Ch.A\)](#), the largest association of Latin@ youth in the US, and the student government at [University of Massachusetts-Boston](#) voting to support divestment and other BDS initiatives. The first student-led BDS U.S. national conference was held at the University of Pennsylvania earlier this year following a successful national student conference at Columbia University last year.

- BDS student groups are growing across Europe. In the UK the National Union of Students has [endorsed](#) student campaigns that have succeeded in ending relationships between universities and Ahava and Eden Springs. Edinburgh University Student Association [voted](#) to end its contract with G4S.

With the eruption of peoples' upheavals across the Arab world, or what came to be known as the Arab Spring, massive solidarity with Palestinian rights in Arab countries is increasingly being channeled in effective BDS campaigns, especially in Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco, Qatar and Kuwait.

The Israeli establishment is growing increasingly concerned with the growth of the BDS movement. Israeli [President Shimon Peres recently cited fear of the impacts of BDS as a reason to "make peace"](#). Meanwhile, top [Israeli business leaders have launched their own "peace initiative"](#) out of fear of the impact of BDS. Some Zionist leaders are also starting to call for change in Israeli policies out of fear of BDS. The leading Israeli think tank the Reut Institute has spoken of BDS as a "strategic threat", prompting the Israeli government to pass a [draconian law forbidding any citizen from supporting BDS](#) or any partial boycott. There is a real and growing fear within Israel that it is becoming a pariah state in the way that South Africa once was.

Against the backdrop of continued success and the reactions from Israel, we look forward to working with trade unions, NGOs, faith groups, solidarity organizations, people's movements and people of conscience all over the world to continue to spread BDS as an effective and morally compelling tool in support of the Palestinian struggle for comprehensive rights. Israel realizes it and so do we: BDS is spreading and having a significant impact on Israel's occupation, colonization and apartheid; it is time to push even further into the mainstream to entrench Israel's pariah status. Only thus can Palestinians regain their rights and exercise self-determination, and without that there can never be a just and sustainable peace in the entire region.

BNC Secretariat