



BDS National Committee (BNC)

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Palestinians to FC Barcelona: **Cancel Shalit visit! Inviting him is complicity in covering up Israel's occupation**

Palestinian civil society unequivocally rejects FC Barcelona's attempt to "balance" its invite of Gilad Shalit, an Israeli soldier responsible for enforcing Israel's illegal siege of Gaza and party to war crimes, by offering tickets to Palestinians so they can also attend next weekend's El Clásico against Real Madrid. According to news reports, Shalit will be hosted in the presidential box at Camp Nou following an official request by an Israeli ex-Minister.¹

Following public anger in Spain, the club was forced to issue a reconciliatory statement stating its commitment to "peace and harmony" in the Middle East and offering tickets to Palestinians.²

"The statement misses the point", said Zaid Shuaibi, Networking and Outreach Coordinator of the BNC, the largest Palestinian civil society coalition, **"there is no moral equivalence between Israel, an occupying power responsible for war crimes and persistent violations of international law, and an occupied population denied its most basic rights. FC Barcelona must reject any form of complicity with Israeli crimes by rescinding its official invitation to Gilad Shalit."**

Earlier, Palestinian national footballer Mahmoud Sarsak confirmed his rejection of an invite issued by the club for him to attend the same match, **"I support the Palestinian call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) of Israel and refuse to be used as a 'fig leaf' by FC Barcelona, a club that I deeply admire. I won't share this platform with someone who is directly responsible for the suffering of my people."** Sarsak spent 3-years in detention and isolation without charge by Israel and was released last July after an epic 3-month hunger strike. FIFA and footballers Eric Cantona, Kanoute and Anelka, among others, spoke out against his incarceration by Israel.³

News of FC Barcelona's invitation to the former Israeli soldier led to vocal protests in Spain and intense media coverage.⁴ A petition so far has gathered 1500 signatures and more actions are planned in the days leading up to the match.⁵ Palestinian footballers issued an open letter to FC Barcelona denouncing the club's invitation to Shalit.⁶

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 (PFUJPE)

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

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Note to editors

1. The Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC) is the largest coalition in Palestinian civil society that includes Palestinian political parties, unions, NGOs and grassroots organisations and leads the global BDS movement. For more information: <http://www.bdsmovement.net/bdsintro#.UGbFCPIrZjE>
2. The 2005 Palestinian civil society call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions of Israel: <http://www.bdsmovement.net/call>
3. Palestinians have an agreed definition of what constitutes normalization with Israel as published on the website of the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI): <http://pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1047>

Relevant Excerpt:

(5) Event or project promotes false symmetry or “balance”

Cultural events and projects involving Palestinians and/or Arabs and Israelis that promote “balance” between the “two sides” in presenting their respective narratives, as if on par, or are otherwise based on the false premise that the colonizers and the colonized, the oppressors and the oppressed, are equally responsible for the “conflict,” are intentionally deceptive, intellectually dishonest and morally reprehensible. Such events and projects, often seeking to encourage dialogue or “reconciliation between the two sides” without addressing the requirements of justice, promote the normalization of oppression and injustice. All such events and projects that bring Palestinians and/or Arabs and Israelis together, unless the Israeli side is explicitly supportive of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and unless the project/event is framed within the explicit context of joint opposition to occupation and other forms of Israeli oppression of the Palestinians, are strong candidates for boycott. Other factors that PACBI takes into consideration in evaluating such events and projects are the sources of funding, the design of the program, the objectives of the sponsoring organization(s), the participants, and similar relevant factors.

¹ <http://www.libertaddigital.com/deportes/liga/2012-09-16/gilad-shalit-invitado-al-camp-nou-para-ver-el-barca-madrid-1276468679/>

² <http://www.fcbarcelona.com/club/detail/article/fc-barcelona-for-peace-and-harmony-in-the-middle-east>

³ <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5ipIHepnSO0qzcm5->

<nxcAw8MDchw?docId=CNG.b2371552eed6d00aa85ebc4c2e4bc6b.a41> and http://www.kanoute.com/Press-Release---Mahmoud-Sarsak_ad-id!32.ks

⁴ <http://www.change.org/es/peticiones/president-of-the-f-c-barcelona-don-t-invite-the-former-israeli-soldier-gilad-shalit-to-the-camp-nou#news>

⁵ <http://www.change.org/es/peticiones/president-of-the-f-c-barcelona-don-t-invite-the-former-israeli-soldier-gilad-shalit-to-the-camp-nou#news>

⁶ http://www.odsg.org/co/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2634%3Aopen-letter-from-gaza-footballers-to-fc-barcelona-club-do-not-side-with-the-oppressor&catid=39%3AStatements&Itemid=62