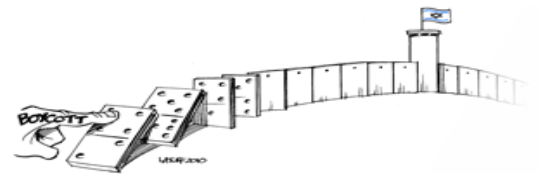


Adalah-NY:

The New York Campaign for the Boycott of Israel



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON THE CULTURAL BOYCOTT OF ISRAEL NOVEMBER 2015

WHAT IS BDS?

Modeled on the global boycott movement that helped end apartheid in South Africa, the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement mobilizes grassroots campaigns to pressure institutions to hold Israel accountable. Boycotts are a tested, non-violent and morally consistent means to mobilize pressure for justice. BDS educates, stimulates discussion, and empowers people to act for change.

Palestinian civil society organizations launched the movement in 2005, calling upon civil society and people of conscience worldwide to carry out BDS campaigns against Israel until it recognizes the Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination and fully complies with international law by:

- Ending its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantling the Wall;
- Recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and
- Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN resolution 194.

The BDS call has been endorsed by the vast majority of Palestinian civil society - over 170 Palestinian parties, organizations and trade unions, representing Palestinian citizens of Israel, Palestinians living in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, and Palestinian refugees in the diaspora.

WHAT IS THE CULTURAL BOYCOTT?

Cultural boycott is one component of the international BDS campaign. Cultural boycott involves the refusal to interact in any way with Israeli cultural institutions that are complicit in violations of Palestinian rights (the great majority of Israeli institutions) by refusing to perform in Israel or to participate in cultural events sponsored by the Israeli government or those complicit cultural institutions. The Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) has developed detailed guidelines for cultural boycott.

DOESN'T CULTURE TRANSCEND POLITICS?

Israel has politicized art by exploiting it to help "rebrand" its apartheid regime. The Israeli government employs a "Brand Israel" campaign to paint Israel as a center for arts and culture, and distract attention from Israeli repression. In 2005 an Israeli official explained: "We see culture as a propaganda tool of the first rank, and I do not differentiate between propaganda and culture." Engaging with Israel supports the existing power relations and makes a political statement in support of the settler-colonial apartheid regime.

WHY SINGLE OUT ISRAEL?

Israel perpetrates serious crimes without sanction, while benefitting from preferential trade agreements, diplomatic protection, and military aid. The US grants Israel the most aid of any country, and shields Israel from any criticism in the UN and international forums. The US and others target a number of countries with boycotts and sanctions. The EU has sanctions in force against numerous countries - Burma, Moldova, Zimbabwe, Iran, etc.. The UK lists arms embargos against 14 countries. In reality, Israel is singled out for impunity, and privileges. With governments failing to act, a civil society-driven boycott is an appropriate response.

AREN'T CALLS FOR CULTURAL BOYCOTT AGAINST ISRAEL A FORM OF ANTI-SEMITISM?

The BDS call doesn't target Jews, or even Israelis as Jews. The call is strictly directed against Israel as a colonial power that violates Palestinian rights and international law. Furthermore, the BDS movement has growing support from progressive European and American Jews who refuse to allow Israel to speak in the name of all Jews. Labeling actions targeting Israeli apartheid and colonial rule as anti-Semitic is itself anti-Semitic, because it assumes that all Jews are somehow responsible for Israeli crimes.

DOESN'T THE CULTURAL BOYCOTT VIOLATE ISRAELI CULTURAL WORKERS' RIGHTS?

For decades, Palestinian artists have faced stifling Israeli travel restrictions, arbitrary detention, political repression, and roadblocks that prevent them from rehearsing, exhibiting work, and performing. The world has been silent about these systematic violations of Palestinian cultural workers' rights. However, now that an Israeli cultural worker may be impacted by a boycott due to their complicity in those rights violations, some are prioritizing defending Israeli artists' freedom. They would treat cultural workers' rights not as a freedom for all, but rather as a privilege for some.

WON'T PUNITIVE MEASURES ALIENATE RATHER THAN PERSUADE ISRAELIS?

The world has tried "constructive engagement" with Israel, as with apartheid South Africa. It has utterly failed again. Since 2006 Israel's criminality has escalated: expanding settlements, a war on Lebanon, collectively punishing Gaza with a brutal blockade, and multiple attacks on Gaza, killing thousands and injuring tens of thousands. Nonetheless, Israel has not faced punitive measures, but has been given more weapons and aid. The world has enabled increasingly brutal Israeli actions.

DOES THE BOYCOTT TARGET INDIVIDUALS OR INSTITUTIONS? WHY ARE SOME ISRAELI ARTISTS TARGETED?

PACBI calls for the boycott of Israeli cultural institutions. PACBI's guidelines state that virtually all Israeli cultural institutions, unless proven otherwise, are complicit in maintaining the denial of basic Palestinian rights, whether through their silence or involvement in whitewashing or diverting attention from Israel's rights violations. Accordingly, these institutions (mainly major state and public entities), all their products, and all the events they sponsor or support must be boycotted. Similarly, international artists and cultural workers are urged not to exhibit, present, or showcase their work or lecture at complicit Israeli cultural institutions or events, or to grant permission for the publication or exhibition of work by such institutions. Individuals are only targeted if they *represent* the state of Israel or a complicit Israeli institution, or help Israel to "rebrand" itself. Individuals are not targeted by the cultural boycott based on identity (citizenship, race, gender, or religion) or opinion.

CAN I GO TO ISRAEL, MEET ISRAELIS AND NOT VIOLATE THE BOYCOTT?

Yes, some artists have demonstrated how to go to Israel, engage with Israelis, and not violate the cultural boycott. They interacted solely with venues, organizations and publishers that were anti-zionist.

WHAT HAS CULTURAL BOYCOTT ACHIEVED?

Many artists have cancelled performances or refused to participate in cultural events in Israel, including [Gil Scott-Heron](#), [Carlos Santana](#), [Elvis Costello](#), [Cassandra Wilson](#), [Cat Power](#), [Lauryn Hill](#), [Taleb Kweli](#), [Moddi](#), [Massive Attack](#), [Faithless](#), [Gorillaz Sound System](#), [the Klaxons](#), [Primus](#), [Mira Nair](#), [Ken Loach](#), [Alice Walker](#), [Mike Leigh](#), [Arundhati Roy](#), and [Jean-Luc Godard](#). Thousands more have signed pledges in different countries committing to uphold the cultural boycott. Several countries have established campaigns for the academic and cultural boycott of Israel – including USACBI in the US. Complicit Israeli cultural institutions like the Batsheva Dance Company and the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra have been met with protests around the world.

HOW CAN I JOIN THE MOVEMENT?

- Sign onto one of the cultural boycott pledges - Adalah-NY locally, and USACBI nationally.
- Participate in or organize boycott actions around the city with groups like Adalah-NY, Jewish Voice for Peace, CODEPINK, and Students for Justice in Palestine.
- Create pro-boycott cultural work - songs, dances, music, comics, videos, etc..
- Educate and mobilize others to join the movement.