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Three Deceptive Myths of the BDS Movement

Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) advocates use inspiring human rights language to condemn Israel—but are their accusations accurate?

Supporters of BDS make three stirring demands: Stop Israel's colonization, occupation and apartheid in Palestine. But how valid are these three accusations, and what are the real goals of the BDS movement—for Israel and the Palestinian people? Above all, does BDS really seek peace?

What are the facts?

Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions advocates shrewdly use human rights rhetoric to inspire followers. But anyone tempted by this appeal must ask two questions: 1) How true are BDS's accusations against Israel, and 2) what is BDS's political agenda? If we examine the hard facts, we see that BDS is actually based on false myths and a disguised purpose.

Myth #1: Israel is colonizing Palestine. While BDS paints the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in polarized terms, in fact it is one of the world's most complex, emotionally fraught disputes. BDS portrays Palestinians as the region's sole "indigenous" people, while in truth Palestine has two indigenous peoples—Jews and Arabs. Jews have lived uninterrupted in the Holy Land for more than 3,000 years, since the time of biblical Abraham. Israel does not insist it is the only heir to Palestine, but BDS advocates assert Jews have no right to a state there. This denies the Jewish people the right to national liberation. Since colonialism is "the control of one nation by 'transplanted' people of another nation," and Jews are natives to Palestine, Israel cannot be termed a colonial force.

Myth #2: Israel is occupying Palestinian territories. It's simplistic to argue that Palestine "belongs" entirely to either Jews or Arabs. Ownership of these territories is *disputed*—it can only be determined by negotiations. While Israel does not deny Arab rights to a state in Palestine, BDS opposes Jewish self-determination. When Israel declared a state in 1948, it was attacked by five Arab armies whose intention was to expel the Jews. In 1967, Arab armies again attacked Israel, but Jordan, Egypt and Syria actually lost to Israel territory they had controlled. In fact, none of the land Israel currently "occupies" in Israel or its ancient lands of Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) was ever part of an Arab state. While Israel maintains security in parts of the West Bank, it is to protect Israelis from terror attacks that have killed thousands. More pointedly: As late as 2007 Israel offered Palestinians 95% of the West Bank, as well as a capital in Jerusalem, as an incentive for peace, but the Palestinians rejected this offer.

For all its emotive appeals, the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions effort is based on falsehoods—a hijacking of human rights values. Even Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has acknowledged that BDS is counterproductive, proclaiming, "We do not support the boycott of Israel." Indeed, anyone who truly desires peace between Israelis and Palestinians must oppose this pernicious movement.

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While smart diplomacy will surely be needed to resolve the territorial issues that divide Arabs and Israelis, it is intellectually dishonest to declare Israel an occupier.

Myth #3: Israel is an apartheid state. Apartheid was "an official policy of racial segregation, involving political, legal, and economic discrimination in South Africa against nonwhites." In fact, Israel is by far the most diverse nation in the Middle East—one whose population is 21% Arab and includes the region's largest Christian population. Israel's Jews hail from Ethiopia, Yemen, Morocco, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, as well as every European nation and Latin America. Unlike any other Middle Eastern nation, equal

civil rights of all ethnic groups in Israel are protected—and they include freedom of speech, assembly, suffrage and sexual orientation. *No ethnic group is segregated.* Political office is open to every ethnicity: Israeli Arabs are members of the parliament and supreme court. Economic discrimination is forbidden, and when it occurs, as in the U.S., the courts oppose it. In short, Israel bears no resemblance to South Africa. It is an exemplar of liberty for minorities.

What do the BDS leaders really want? While the U.S., Western European powers, Israel and the U.N. Security Council have embraced a "two-state solution" as the basis for peace between Israel and the Palestinians, BDS leaders, like Ali Abuminah, argue for a one-state solution in which Arabs outnumber Jews. When BDS talks about occupation, it refers not to disputed West Bank territories, but to all of Israel. BDS has consistently opposed Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, calling them "collaborationist." In fact, the leaders of BDS openly confess their goal is not peace, but conquest. No wonder BDS founder Omar Barghouti admits, "If the occupation ends . . . would that end support for BDS? No, it wouldn't—no." This explains why BDS insists on the "right of return" not for the estimated 50,000 living Palestinian refugees of Israel's 1948 War of Independence, but for their *five million descendants*—a bizarre definition of "refugee" applied to no other people. Of course, such an influx of foreign Arabs into Israel would swamp the Jewish state, conquering it demographically.

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