What is BDS?

BDS stands for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions. In the Israel-Palestine context, BDS refers to a call issued by over 170 Palestinian organizations in 2005 asking that the international community implement “broad boycotts and... divestment initiatives against Israel similar to those applied to South Africa in the apartheid era.” The initial Palestinian call was supported by a broad coalition that included unions, academic institutions, political parties, cultural groups, and civil society organizations.

BDS is a form of economic activism which is premised on the idea that violations of Palestinians’ rights result not only from Israeli government policies and actions, but also from corporate and institutional policies and actions that support and sustain Israel’s occupation and violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. Boycott and divestment actions therefore target institutions and companies (Israeli and International) that profit from or are complicit in the violation of Palestinian rights with the goal of changing corporate/institutional and Israeli actions. In all cases, BDS actions target institutions – not individuals – for their complicity in Israel’s occupation and/or human rights abuses.

What does BDS hope to accomplish?

The Palestinian BDS call requests that international civil society groups and individuals target Israel using boycott, divestment and sanctions tactics until Israel meets its obligation under international law to recognize the Palestinian people’s right to self-determination and:

1. Ends its occupation of all Arab lands and dismantles the Wall

2. Recognizes the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and

3. Respects, protects and promotes the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN resolution 194.

Who leads the “BDS Movement”?

The “BDS Movement” is made up of an informal coalition of international, national and local groups which include faith based organizations, peace groups, solidarity and student activists, and other coalitions of concerned individuals. Supporters of the Palestinian BDS Call hold in common a commitment to using non-violent boycott, divestment, and sanctions tactics until Israel ends its occupation and complies with the rights outlined above.

“I have been to Palestine where I’ve witnessed the racially segregated housing and the humiliation of Palestinians at military roadblocks. I can’t help but remember the conditions we experienced in South Africa under apartheid. We could not have achieved our freedom without […] boycotts and divestment[.] [T]his [is an] urgently needed global campaign for justice, freedom, and peace.” - Archbishop Desmond Tutu
What Does Palestinian BDS Look Like?

Boycott, divestment, and sanctions are non-violent tactics used by activists to help realize specific changes. They are not ends unto themselves. For this reason, **BDS is not a one-size fits all movement** but rather is a movement that recognizes the importance of carrying out customized actions targeted to local contexts and political realities. In this sense there is no leadership within the BDS movement that dictates what actions activists should take to help realize the three core BDS rights. However, the Boycott National Committee was set up in 2007 by the Palestinian signatories to the 2005 BDS Call and plays a key role in coordinating and building awareness about BDS actions and successes around the world.

BDS campaigns take many different forms. Groups around the world have organized street protests, board room lobbying, shareholder actions, lawsuits, strikes, teach-ins, and other actions to call attention to corporate and institutional complicity in occupation. Among others, targets have included arms manufacturers, agricultural exporters, cosmetic manufacturers, cultural groups, investment firms and academic institutions. What links these disparate campaigns is their common goal of ending corporate and institutional complicity with Israel’s occupation and violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. Below are examples of several broadly successful BDS campaigns:

### We Divest

The “We Divest” Campaign asks investment giant TIAA-CREF to divest from corporations that profit from the military occupation. TIAA-CREF is one of the largest retirement account providers in the US and has the largest social choice investment fund in the US. Companies targeted through this campaign include Veolia, Caterpillar Inc., Elbit Systems, Motorola Solutions, HP, and Northup Grumman. During 2012 the campaign marked a significant victory when TIAA-CREF dropped Caterpillar Inc. from its social choice accounts in part due to Caterpillar’s provision of military equipment to the Israeli military.

### Stolen Beauty

“Stolen Beauty” is a boycott campaign initiated by Code Pink in 2009 which targets stores that sell products produced by AHAVA Dead Sea Laboratories. AHAVA produces a popular line of beauty and skin care products in an illegal Israeli settlement located in the West Bank using natural resources stolen from West Bank portions of the Dead Sea in violation of international law. Campaign actions have targeted retailers selling and celebrities endorsing AHAVA products. As a result of the campaign, a number of stores and celebrity endorsers have ended their associations with AHAVA.

### Dump Veolia

Veolia profits by operating segregated bus lines connecting settlements to Israel, operating a landfill built on confiscated Palestinian land in the West Bank for the benefit of settlements, and constructing and operating a light rail system built in occupied East Jerusalem and servicing Israeli settlements. Since 2005 groups in Europe and the US have organized a variety of highly successful boycott campaigns targeting Veolia. As a result the company has lost over $13 billion in contracts and many investors, with several communities worldwide declaring themselves "Veolia Free".

### AFSC Principles

AFSC’s Principles for a Just and Lasting Peace in Palestine and Israel uphold the right of Palestinians and Israelis to self-determination, emphasizing that ending Israel’s occupation and addressing the Palestinian refugees’ right of return is prerequisite to realizing a just peace. Quakers and AFSC have long supported boycotts, divestment, and sanctions as economic tactics that appeal to human conscience and change behavior. In the 1800s, Quakers helped lead the “Free Produce Movement,” a boycott of goods produced using slave labor. In recent times, AFSC has participated in boycott and divestment campaigns connected to the civil rights, anti-apartheid, farm worker, and prison rights struggles. Since 1948 AFSC has worked with both Palestinians and Israelis to achieving a just and lasting peace and we remain committed to supporting nonviolent activism designed to achieve this end.

For More Information:
- The Boycott National Committee – [www.bdsmovement.net](http://www.bdsmovement.net)
- The Palestinian Academic and Cultural Boycott Initiative – [www.pacbi.org](http://www.pacbi.org)
- We Divest – [www.wedivest.org](http://www.wedivest.org)
- Who Profits - [www.whoprofits.org](http://www.whoprofits.org)
- Global Exchange: Economic Activism for Palestine Project - [www.globalexchange.org/eap](http://www.globalexchange.org/eap)
- Quakers with a Concern for Palestine-Israel – [www.quakerpi.org/default.shtml](http://www.quakerpi.org/default.shtml)
- The US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation - [www.endtheoccupation.org](http://www.endtheoccupation.org)
- Kairos Palestine – [www.kairosPalestine.ps](http://www.kairosPalestine.ps)

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