



COMMITTEE FOR ACCURACY IN
MIDDLE EAST REPORTING AND ANALYSIS

BDS: AN INTRINSICALLY ANTISEMITIC MOVEMENT

OVERVIEW

The Palestinian BDS campaign calling for broad **Boycotts, Divestment** initiatives, **Sanctions** and embargoes against Israel was launched in July 2005, four years after the idea was first raised at the United Nations-sponsored World Conference on Racism in Durban. It was an attempt to demonize the Jewish state as an apartheid country akin to South Africa and make it into a pariah state among the nations of the world. The goal of BDS, as articulated in the pervasive chants of BDS protesters and in statements by its founders and leaders, is to eliminate the Jewish state and replace it with an Arab Palestinian state “from the [Jordan] river to the [Mediterranean] sea” – i.e. the entire territory of Israel’s borders. Underlying the rejection of a Jewish state while promoting Palestinian nationalist aspirations is the claim of Palestinian indigeneity and the denial of Jewish nationhood and of Judaism’s roots in the Land of Israel. It is a glaring example of antisemitism that is compounded by the double standards, delegitimization and demonization tactics used to promote the BDS narrative.

The BDS steering committee’s lead constituent is the Council of National and Islamic Forces, made up of Palestinian groups that include Hamas, Hizballah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, PFLP, and others designated as foreign terrorist organizations. While BDS leaders claim they adhere to anti-racist and non-violent principles, they rally on behalf of Palestinian terrorists who have engaged in deadly violence which they justify as “armed resistance.”

With its ever-broadening definition of “complicity,” BDS campaigns are not confined to attacking the existing Jewish state but target the entire Jewish nation and history. It is no wonder the movement attracts antisemites of all stripes who seek to normalize classic antisemitism under an innocent guise of human rights advocacy.

DENYING JEWISH NATIONHOOD AND BIRTHRIGHT

Below are just three of the numerous examples that demonstrate BDS leaders and teachers denying Jewish nationhood and legacy as part of their mission.

Example 1: BDS leader and organizer Lara Kiswani explains to United Auto Worker’s BDS caucus meeting the ideology of the movement:

“We’re resisting colonialism in Palestine, and colonialism entails all of occupied Palestine, from Haifa, to Jerusalem, to Ramallah...”¹

Example 2: Hatem Bazian, a lecturer at University of Berkeley’s Department of Ethnic Studies who founded the BDS groups Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) asserts that “The ‘Jewish nation’ is the central myth of Zionism. It needs to be dismantled.”² He also tweets:

“Sorry American Jews, you don’t have a birthright.”³

Example 3: A BDS conference hosted by SOAS Palestine Society includes an “educational” handout contending that today’s Jews are racist interlopers who have no historic ties or roots in Israel and are not descended from the Israelites.⁴

HOLOCAUST DENIAL AND TARGETING JEWS UNDER THE AEGIS OF BDS

With its anti-Jewish foundation, the BDS movement provides society and a haven for antisemites to freely indulge in Jew hatred. Examples of such expressions of antisemitism abound, both on and off campus. Below are just a few.

Example 1: BDS social media sites use Nazi imagery and themes to depict Jews — or the Jewish state as a Jewish collective — as vermin, sub-human, *untermenschen*. Some posts accuse Jews of orchestrating and fomenting wars and terrorism around the world. Other posts engage in Holocaust denial, attacking as lies the personal accounts of survival by Holocaust survivor and Nobel-winning author Elie Wiesel and the documented experiences of child diarist and Nazi victim Anne Frank; they deny the existence of Nazi death camps to exterminate the Jews. 5

Example 2: Posts on BDS social media sites attack Judaism as a Satanic cult and its religious teachings as evil texts instructing Jews to unethically and immorally profit from non-Jews. 6

Example 3: South African BDS chapter coordinator, Muhammad Desai, justifies anti-Jewish rhetoric by BDS protesters who cry, “Shoot the Jew” outside the performance of Israeli jazz musician Daniel Zamir at Johannesburg’s Wits University.7

Example 4: BDS groups protesting the presence of IDF reservists speaking on the York University campus call out to the speakers and Jewish attendees, “Go back to the ovens, go back to Europe!”8

Example 5: The BDS-affiliated University of Toronto Graduate Student Union refuses to support efforts by the Hillel organization to make kosher food available for Jewish students on the grounds that an accommodation to Jewish religious requirements is “pro-Israel” and therefore unacceptable to the union’s BDS members. 9

Example 6: A BDS group in South Africa places a pig’s head in the kosher aisle of a Cape Town supermarket, taking aim at Jewish religion under the guise of protesting against Israel. 10

Example 7: The BDS-aligned Student Representative Council of South Africa’s Durban University of Technology calls for the college to expel Jewish students, “especially those who do not support the Palestinian struggle.”11

Example 8: BDS activists at UCLA block the nomination of a Jewish student to the judicial council of the student union on the grounds of her affiliation with Jewish organizations. A subsequent vote is held (which the student wins) following complaints about the manner in which she has been singled out as a Jew.12

Example 9: The BDS Action Network at Montreal’s McGill University launches a campaign to remove from student society leadership positions Jewish students who support the existence of a Jewish state.13 The same BDS group, two years later, demands a Jewish student resign from her position on the student council because she intends to visit Israel.14

Example 10: Boston University and Kent State University chapters of the BDS student organization Students for Justice in Palestine share an antisemitic blood libel on Instagram, suggesting that “Israeli salad” is made with the blood of Palestinian children.15

PHYSICAL ATTACKS, VANDALISM AND INTIMIDATION BY BDS ACTIVISTS

With BDS founders and leaders supporting Palestinian terrorists and attacks on Israelis, it is unsurprising that followers often feel justified to intimidate or use violence against supporters of the Jewish state under the guise of “protest” regardless of their attestations that BDS is a ‘non-violent’ movement. Below are just a few examples.

Example 1: Members of the BDS group Students Against Israeli Apartheid force Jewish students at York University to shelter inside the Hillel office as they attempt to storm the room, hammering on the doors and shouting, “Die Jew. Get the hell off campus” and “Die bitch. Go back to Israel.” The Hillel president is similarly threatened with abusive, anti-Semitic slurs. Students are eventually escorted by police to safety.16

Example 2: Ten years later, the same group physically attacks Jewish students who are gathered to hear a speech by former IDF soldiers. They reportedly chant, “Intifada, Intifada, go back to the ovens.”17

Example 3: In Pretoria, BDS activists protesting products produced in Israel attack employees, hurl rocks and destroy merchandise and equipment, and loot a Jewish-owned store. 18

Example 4: BDS activists attack filmgoers at an Israeli film festival in Berlin. 19

Example 5: At a BDS rally, a Jewish man carrying an Israeli flag is brutally assaulted by a rally participant. The BDS activist is subsequently charged with three separate hate crimes for physically assaulting and threatening Jews who support Israel. 20

Example 6: An SJP activist is charged with hate crimes for throwing rocks at Jewish students outside the Hillel Center at a BDS rally at the University of Illinois. 21

There are growing numbers of such antisemitic incidents occurring both on and off campus. 22

A 2016 study by the Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis found that “the strongest predictors of perceiving a hostile climate toward Israel and Jews is the presence of an active BDS student group -- Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) -- on campus. 23

MAPPING PROJECT

If further proof were needed that the BDS movement against Israel is deeply antisemitic, a malicious “mapping” campaign defaming and targeting Boston-area Jews provides inarguable evidence. The initiative by BDS activists in Massachusetts involves the publication of a map listing the addresses of institutions accused of being complicit in “the colonization of Palestine and harms that [the BDS activists] see as linked.” It calls on followers to use the addresses on the map to “dismantle” and “disrupt” these institutions. The hit list includes a Jewish high school; a center for Jews with disabilities; Jewish student groups; synagogues; Jewish newspapers; a center for Jewish arts; Jewish-run charities, Jewish communal organizations ranging from the ZOA to J Street and a public school district — elementary, middle and high schools — in a neighborhood known for its high concentration of Jewish residents. The BDS activists behind the map appear to encourage violence against those on the list—the allegedly evil Jewish students, artists, worshipers, philanthropists, and disabled people. “These entities exist in the physical world and can be disrupted in the physical world,” the Mapping Project asserts and specifies: “We hope people will use our map to help figure out how to push back effectively.” The activists explain that their maps should be used as “a resource for gathering intelligence on the agents of oppression” and encourage “disruption of the network” through “non-cooperation, community self-defense, and resistance in all its forms” — the latter widely understood to be violent confrontation. It is no wonder that the Goyim Defense League, a white supremacist group that peddles in virulent anti-Semitism, has lauded the mapping project as “super, duper, ooper important.” 24, 25

LOBBYING AGAINST ATTEMPTS TO CLAMP DOWN ON ANTISEMITISM/ANTIZIONISM

As efforts to defund the BDS movement and legislation to combat its antisemitic deeds increase, BDS activists have responded with campaigns to redefine antisemitism and present themselves as political victims of those seeking to suppress their free speech and civil rights. But in order to curb the violent antisemitism that is increasing in this country, 26 actions must be taken to counter the demonizing rhetoric and attacks by the BDS movement, and the climate of hatred thereby created.

For additional details, see: “BACKGROUND: The Intrinsic Bigotry of BDS”
(<https://www.camera.org/article/backgrounder-the-intrinsic-antisemitism-of-bds/#violence>)

FOOTNOTES

1 UAW 2865 BDS Caucus Panel Discussion (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZMp83syN40&t=840s>)

2 <https://twitter.com/hatembazian/status/986966906040041472>

3 <https://twitter.com/hatembazian/status/890248299873271809>

4 <https://aiu.libcat.my/cgi-bin/koha/opac-detail.pl?biblionumber=131717>

5 <https://www.camera.org/article/backgrounder-the-intrinsic-antisemitism-of-bds/#classic>

6 <https://www.memri.org/dttm/incitement-against-jews-us-based-neo-nazi-and-white-supremacist-members-pro-palestinian-and-0>

7 <https://www.jpost.com/Jewish-World/Jewish-Features/South-Africa-BDS-leaders-defends-call-to-kill-the-Jew-325075>

8 <https://www.frontpagemag.com/bds-and-antifa-bigots-shout-back-ovens-torontos-daniel-greenfield/>

9 <https://www.jpost.com/Diaspora/University-of-Toronto-student-union-claims-Kosher-food-is-pro-Israel-608155>

10 <https://www.algemeiner.com/2014/10/24/south-african-bds-activists-target-woolworths-kosher-food-section-with-severed-pigs-head/>

- 11 <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/israel-boycott-activists-call-for-jews-to-be-expelled-from-south-african-university>
- 12 <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/06/us/debate-on-a-jewish-student-at-ucla.html>
- 13 <https://thecjn.ca/perspectives/opinions/bds-campaign-stop-jews-serving-mcgill-student-council/>
- 14 <https://thecjn.ca/news/canada/mcgill-student-union-censures-jewish-student-over-israel-trip/>
- 15 https://twitter.com/ADL_Tracker/status/1679527189895602176/photo/1
- 16 <https://www.jpost.com/jewish-world/jewish-news/jewish-students-held-hostage-in-toronto-hillel>
- 17 <https://torontosun.com/news/local-news/anti-israel-protest-at-york-university-turns-violent>
- 18 <https://www.cufi.org.uk/news/sa-21-arrested-at-violent-bds-protest-in-south-africa/>
- 19 <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/violent-bds-activists-assault-israeli-film-festival-attendees-in-berlin-601065>
- 20 <https://nypost.com/2022/06/29/saadah-masoud-gets-hate-crime-charge-in-matt-greenman-assault-in-nyc/>
- 21 <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/article-709333>
- 22 <https://amchainitiative.org/search-by-incident#incident/display-by-date/>
- 23 <https://scholarworks.brandeis.edu/esploro/outputs/9924088244301921>
- 24 <https://www.camera.org/article/bds-puts-target-on-massachusetts-jews-members-of-congress-speak-out/>
- 25 <https://www.camera.org/article/boston-mapping-project-an-anti-semitic-campaign-goes-awry/>
- 26 <https://www.adl.org/resources/press-release/us-antisemitic-incidents-hit-highest-level-ever-recorded-adl-audit-finds>