

Amnesty International Endorses the Inherent Right of the Boycott Divestment Sanctions (BDS) Campaign against Israel

By [Palestinian BDS National Committee](#)

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Read our recent statement [Israel's legal warfare on BDS fosters repression and McCarthyism across the world](#) [here](#).

Palestinian, Israeli and international human rights defenders are unnerved, but certainly undeterred, by the thinly-veiled threat of physically harming leading BDS activists recently made by Israeli Minister of Intelligence [Yisrael Katz](#).

Katz in his statements, made during an anti-BDS conference organized by a right-wing Israeli daily on 28 March 2016, plays on the official Israeli military term for assassination, “targeted thwarting,” and adds “civil” to it. But nothing “civil” can be expected given the prevalence in Israeli society of almost unprecedented racial and violent incitement against the indigenous Palestinians and the popular Israeli cheering of [extrajudicial killings](#).

Israeli Minister of Strategic Affairs and anti-BDS czar, [Gilad Erdan](#), also threatened that BDS activists “will start to pay a price,” without revealing any details. In the immediately following sentence, however, he explained that he did not mean any “physical harm” as these are “sensitive times.” Negating his intention to physically harm Palestinian human rights defenders in this particular context almost certainly normalizes the opposite, that it is conceivable, if not probable, in *less sensitive* times to physically target BDS activists.

The seriousness of these threats by Katz and Erdan must be seen in light of increased Israeli lawlessness and criminal impunity. Even [Zionist Israeli dissenters](#) who dare to reveal some Israeli war crimes are tainted as “[traitors](#)” by Israeli officials.

The last time a sitting Israeli prime minister was labelled as such, a fanatic Jewish-Israeli took matters into his own hands and assassinated Yitzhak Rabin.

These vile threats must be exposed to the world and presented in the mainstream as part of Israel’s “serious human rights violations,” including “extrajudicial killings,” that [US Senator Patrick Leahy](#) has called on the Department of State to investigate.

Israel’s regime of occupation, settler-colonialism and apartheid should face international sanctions as sweeping as those that were imposed on another lawless regime—apartheid South Africa.

No mafia-like threat from anyone will “thwart” BDS activists from advocating for freedom,

justice and equality for the entire Palestinian people, in our homeland and in exile.

Israel is losing the battles for hearts and minds internationally, among major trade unions, churches, academic associations, student governments, artists collectives, LGBTQ networks, among others. Both Israel and the BDS movement can detect the Palestinian “South Africa moment” approaching.

This is why Israel is resorting to fostering a [new McCarthyism](#), intimidating, bullying and threatening those who criticize its apartheid and occupation and those who take effective nonviolent action to end them. Israel is launching a massive, very well-funded campaign in western countries to delegitimize BDS.

The most effective response to Israel’s latest desperate threats against BDS human rights defenders is not to get distracted by them and to intensify academic, cultural, economic and military boycott, divestment and eventually sanctions campaigns against its pariah regime, its complicit institutions and all the banks and corporations that are implicated in it.

The only way to “stop BDS” is to end Israel’s regime of oppression, allowing the Palestinian people to exercise its rights under international law, especially the inalienable right to self-determination. The Palestinian people, like all other peoples around the world, cannot and will not accept anything less than our freedom, justice, equality and dignity in our homeland. No colonial threats or oppression can extinguish a people’s passion for freedom and justice.

Amnesty International’s Position

Criticizing Israel’s intimidation campaign and violent threats against BDS activists, Amnesty International expressed its concern “for the safety and liberty of Palestinian human rights defender Omar Barghouti, and other Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) activists, following calls alluding to threats, including of physical harm and deprivation of basic rights, made by Israeli ministers at an anti-Boycott Divestment and Sanction conference in Jerusalem on 28 March 2016.”

The statement said: “[Omar Barghouti] campaigns to hold Israel accountable for human rights and other international law violations and advocates for the use of non-violent means in doing so.”

The BNC warmly welcomes Amnesty International’s defence of the right of BDS activists to advocate for Palestinian rights under international law and calls on all international human rights organizations, particularly in the US and Europe, to unequivocally uphold the same right.

[Glenn Greenwald](#) has described the well-orchestrated series of draconian measures taken in France, the US and the UK, among others, against the BDS movement as the “greatest threat to free speech in the West”. Yet Israel’s exceptionalism in some mainstream quarters in the west remains intact.

South African Archbishop Emeritus [Desmond Tutu has once likened](#) this singling out of Israel’s regime for unconditional military, political and financial support, not to mention protection from accountability, by the US and other western governments to placing Israel “on a pedestal” above every other state. Many people are afraid to criticize Israel’s policies,

Tutu argues, because of the exceptionally intimidating methods used by its lobby.

BDS is an inclusive, anti-racist movement that is anchored in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and is opposed on principle to all forms of racism and discrimination, including anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. The BDS movement is advocating for Israel to be taken off “the pedestal” and held to account like other states committing similar crimes.

It is clear that [Israel has been lobbying](#) for and is directly behind these deeply worrying anti-democratic attacks that are intended to criminalize the advocacy of Palestinian rights. But they are also part of a growing trend in western countries of eroding civil liberties in the name of ‘security’, and of governments and unaccountable elites concentrating power in their hands and undermining democratic principles.

EU and US complicity

By not only participating in this Israeli anti-BDS fest of hate and violent threats against a nonviolent human rights movement and its main activists but also keeping silent about these threats, the US Administration and the EU have effectively given a [tacit green light](#) to Israel to harm human rights defenders engaged in BDS activism.

The BNC holds both the US and the EU accountable should Israel make good on its threats and harm human rights defenders who are active in the BDS movement, bodily or otherwise.

Like the US government, the EU has always been implicated, albeit to a lesser extent, in enabling and maintaining Israel’s occupation and apartheid. But by sending its Tel Aviv ambassador to join this Israeli war on nonviolent Palestinian, European, Israeli and other human rights defenders it has reached [a new low](#) of hypocrisy and complicity.

This hypocrisy is further accentuated by the fact that the EU ambassador’s co-panelists in the conference [included](#) the fanatic Israeli settler leader [Dani Dayan](#) and a retired Israeli colonel accused of responsibility for [horrific war crimes](#) in Gaza.

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