

Anti-BDS Motion - Why Does Canada Sanction Other Countries for Human Rights Violations but Not Israel?

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Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#), [Law and Justice](#)

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

The international community, speaking through the United Nations, has identified three regimes as inimical to human rights - colonialism, apartheid and foreign occupation... Israel's occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem contains elements of all three of these regimes". - John Dugard, UN's former Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

This week, the Canadian Parliament overwhelmingly voted in favour of a motion condemning the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel.

The motion, passed on February 22 by a 229-51 vote, states:

“That, given Canada and Israel share a long history of friendship as well as economic and diplomatic relations, the House reject the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, which promotes the demonization and delegitimization of the State of Israel, and call upon the government to condemn any and all attempts by Canadian organizations, groups or individuals to promote the BDS movement, both here at home and abroad.”

First, there is no such thing as “friendship” between states. States have no friends, they have interests and nothing else.

Second, the BDS movement does not promote “the demonization and delegitimization of the State of Israel,” as the motion puts it, in a very unfactual and questionable manner. The BDS movement promotes international law and Palestinian rights and condemns Israel’s total lack of respect for both.

Despite its emotional and propagandist wording, the motion completely fails to hide the fact that it condemns criticism of human rights violations by Israel. This calls for some explanations.

By condemning a peaceful movement that tries to bring Israel to account, Canada expresses its total disregard for human rights and international law and its sheer hypocrisy when faced with human rights violations.

There are currently 22 states targeted by Canadian sanctions, several of them for human rights violations. And Israel, being Canada’s “friend”, is not one of them, even if the

sanctioned countries' misdeeds pale in comparison to the death and destruction Israel has imposed on Palestinians for decades.

While not one sanction has been imposed on Israel for its war crimes and crimes against humanity, some countries have been sanctioned by Canada simply for "misappropriating state funds."

There are no words to describe the scale of this hypocrisy, but, we don't need any since the facts speak for themselves. Before looking at the list of sanctioned countries and the reasons behind their sanctions, it is worth mentioning only a few facts about Israel.

As mentioned in the quote above, Israel's policies and practices violate the most fundamental human rights of the Palestinians. The Hebrew state has been the subject of at least [77 UN resolutions since 1955](#), and has been criticized in at least [26 resolutions for its violations](#) of U.N. Security Council resolutions.

In July 2015, a [report by Amnesty International](#) found "compelling evidence of serious violations of international humanitarian law by Israeli forces" as well as "strong evidence of war crimes and possible crimes against humanity" during Israel's 2014 assault on Gaza." Evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity were also found during Operation Cast Lead in 2008.

Of course, most reports from the U.N. as well as the ones from human rights organizations mentioned below pretend to be "balanced" by equally blaming both sides, the Israeli army as well as Palestinian militias. If opinions can be "balanced", facts, however, cannot, and the scale of death and destruction doesn't lie. Most, if not all the damage and loss of life occurs on the Palestinian side. Every single time.

These few [facts about Operations Cast Lead](#) in 2008 and [Protective Edge](#) in 2014 prove it:

[Cast Lead](#):

"[B]etween 1,385 and 1,419 Palestinians were killed during Cast Lead, a majority of them civilians, including at least 308 minors under the age of 18. More than 5000 more were wounded. Thirteen Israelis were also killed, including 3 civilians.

[According to the UN](#), 3,540 housing units were completely destroyed, with another 2,870 sustaining severe damage.

[More than 20,000 people](#) - many of them already refugees, some two or three times over - were made homeless."

[Protective Edge](#):

"At least 2,100 Palestinians were killed, of whom the United Nations identified more than 1,500 as civilians, and approximately 11,000 people, mostly civilians, were injured. The tens of thousands of Israeli attacks caused the vast majority of destruction during the fighting, which left uninhabitable 22,000 homes, displacing 108,000 people, and left hundreds of thousands without adequate water or electricity.

Attacks by Palestinian civilians injured 61 Israeli settlers in the West Bank as of

October 31, the UN reported. In addition to the three Israeli teenagers who were killed in June, nine Israeli civilians were killed by Palestinians.”

How many dead Israeli civilians compared to Palestinian civilians? How many housing units destroyed in Israel? How many homeless Israelis? Let’s be honest. A truly balanced report would reflect the facts and not try to equally blame both sides. The forces in this conflict as well as the damage done are anything but equal. They are completely disproportionate.

That being said, Israel’s contempt for international law is legend and with this motion, Canadian Parliamentarians have just proven one more time they are bought and sold.

It is now worth taking a look at the countries against which Canada has placed sanctions and why, since all of them, without exception, pale in comparison to Israel’s bloody record.

The list clearly shows how Canada has no credibility whatsoever when it comes to condemning states for their lack of respect for human rights or people who protest against criminal states, for that matter.

Here is the list of the countries sanctioned for human rights reasons. It should be noted that several, if not all, [background explanations](#) provided on the Canadian Government web site (in brackets) are totally biased and simplistic, when not pure propaganda.

[Belarus](#): “[D]eteriorating human rights situation.”

This includes “widespread harassment and detention of opposition party campaign workers, the physical assault of senior opposition figures, arbitrary use of state powers to support the incumbent president, pressure on state workers and students to support the President, restrictions on the ability of opposition campaigns to communicate with the electorate, and control of the state media to severely restrict access by opposition candidates.”

What happens in the Occupied Territories is much worse, yet no sanctions against Israel.

[Burma](#): “[G]ravity of the human rights and humanitarian situation..., which threatened peace and security in the entire region.”

[Libya](#): “[V]iolence and the use of force against civilians.”

Day-to-day in the Occupied Territories.

[Russia](#): “Activists were beaten, kidnapped and tortured [in Ukraine]. The Russian government encouraged, and supported, these measures.”

Meanwhile, more and more “[Palestinian children \[are\] beaten and tortured](#) by Israeli security forces while in detention.” Read also Israeli NGO [B’Tselem’s report Backed by the System: Abuse and Torture at the Shikma Interrogation Facility](#).

[Sudan](#): “[H]umanitarian crisis and widespread human rights violations resulting from the

conflict in Darfur region”

[Syria](#): “The Syrian Government’s violent crackdown on peaceful protesters led to many civilian deaths and injuries. Thousands of civilians were detained arbitrarily and there were credible reports of summary executions and torture.”

Israel arbitrarily detains Palestinians on a regular basis, including children, and summary executions and torture are common.

[According to B’Tselem](#): “At the end of Dec. 2015, 422 Palestinian minors were held in Israeli prisons as security detainees and prisoners, including 6 administrative detainees.”

According to [Human Rights Watch](#):

“Israeli security forces continued to arrest children suspected of criminal offenses, usually stone-throwing, in their homes at night, at gunpoint; question them without a family member or lawyer present; and coerce them to sign confessions in Hebrew, which they do not understand... As of October 31, Israel held 457 Palestinian administrative detainees without charge or trial, based on secret evidence. Israeli prison authorities shackled hospitalized Palestinians to their hospital beds after they went on long-term hunger strikes to protest their administrative detention.”

Last year, [Amnesty International has condemned](#) “what it called a ‘clear pattern’ of... summary killings... as the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli forces this month [October 2015] rose to [at least 61](#).)

[Ukraine](#): “Activists were beaten, kidnapped and tortured.”

[Zimbabwe](#): “marked escalation in human rights violations and violence directed at the political opposition, a stolen election, the denial of a peaceful democratic transition and a worsening humanitarian situation.”

Other reasons for which Canada has sanctioned countries include:

- “political crisis and conflict” (Yemen, Somalia);
- “violations of ceasefire and hostilities” (Ivory Coast, Democratic Republic of the Congo);
- “misappropriated state funds” (Egypt, Tunisia);
- “heavy loss of human life and widespread material damage resulting from a conflict” (Eritrea, Somalia);
- “nuclear program” (Sanctions on Iran, which has a nonexistent nuclear program, but none on Israel, which is known to possess between 200 and 400 nuclear warheads.)
- “invasion” (Sanctions on Iraq for the invasion of Kuwait... but no sanctions for the U.S. which has illegally invaded Iraq, among other countries, and of course, no sanctions on Israel for decades of occupation);
- “continued escalation of hostilities” (Lebanon)

- “support for the Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone” (Liberia)
- “violation of the constitution and international law” (Ukraine).
- “conducting a test of a nuclear weapon” (North Korea)
- “acts of violence and the increase in acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea against vessels” (Somalia)
- “engaging in violent conflict, much of it along ethnic lines” (South Sudan)

As you probably noticed, none of these countries has been accused of war crimes or crimes against humanity.

Canada imposes sanctions on countries for misappropriated state funds, but regards war criminal state Israel as a “friend” which deserves that it condemns its own citizens for protesting against its supreme crime.

Parliamentarians need to explain this nonsense.

As a member of the United Nations, Canada should, as stated in the U.N. Preamble, “reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and... establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained.”

By voting in favour of this motion, Canadian Parliamentarians have failed to honor their obligations. Miserably.

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