

Barcelona City Decides to Cut All Official Ties with Israel Over Its Systemic Violations of Palestinian Rights

By [Peoples Dispatch](#)

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Barcelona becomes the first city administration in the world to suspend relations with Israel since the BDS movement was started. It has also announced the suspension of the twinning agreement with the Tel Aviv city council.

Ada Colau, Mayor of Barcelona, [announced](#) on Wednesday, February 8, her city's temporary suspension of all official relations with Israel over its apartheid practices and systematic violations of Palestinian rights in the occupied territories.

Colau [wrote a letter](#) to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday announcing the decision to suspend relations with Israel. She also announced that the twinning agreement with the Tel Aviv city council, signed in 1998, was suspended "until the Israeli authorities put an end to the system of violations of the Palestinian people and fully comply with the obligations imposed on them by the international law and the various United Nations resolutions."

Colau clarified that the decision was solely related to the institutional relationship between authorities in Barcelona and Israel, and did not affect relationships between the residents of Israel and the city.

The decision was taken after a petition for the same was signed by [a federation of over 110 human rights groups](#)—called Lafede.cat—from and more than 4,000 residents of the city.

Lafede.cat, also known as the Organizations for Global Justice, had first [published its demands](#) in May 2021 during the 11-day-long attack on the besieged Gaza strip by Israel, in which more than [250 Palestinians were killed](#) and over 2,000 injured. It had also demanded that the Spanish government stop selling weapons to Israel and end all business deals with

Israeli companies.

Action against Israeli apartheid

Colau claimed that the petitioners had asked her to “condemn the crime of apartheid against the Palestinian people, support Palestinian and Israeli organizations working for peace, and break off the twinning agreement between Barcelona and Tel Aviv.”

The Deputy Mayor of Barcelona and the leader of the Catalan Socialist Party in Barcelona, Laia Bonet, opposed the decision and demanded the “restoration” of the relationship. She said that authorities should make efforts to “reinforce, not weaken, the role of Barcelona in the world,” [Catalan News reported](#).

The Israeli Foreign Ministry [responded](#) to the news by claiming that the decision was not backed by the majority of the residents of Barcelona. Some Jewish groups have also called the decision “sophisticated anti-semitism.”

This prompted a wave of international solidarity in favor of Colau and her party Barcelona En Comú on Thursday.

URGENT 📢: Barcelona mayor Ada Colau has been attacked for her courageous decision to suspend ties with the State of Israel. Join leaders around the world rallying to her defense — and call on cities everywhere to join her fight for Palestinian rights. <https://t.co/zClIc8k03j>

— Progressive International (@ProgIntl) [February 9, 2023](#)

European Jews for Just Peace, a federation of 12 European Jewish peace groups, [supported](#) Colau’s decision, claiming that “boycott is a legitimate, time-honored method for civil society to protest against a country that commits human rights abuses. Mayor Colau is following the footsteps of those who boycotted apartheid South Africa.”

The Palestinian national committee of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement also welcomed the decision, “[saluting] the Mayor of Barcelona.” It also noted that Barcelona’s move to suspend ties with Israel was “reminiscent of the historic and courageous city councils that pioneered cutting ties with apartheid South Africa.”

The decision will be voted on in the city council on February 24.

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Featured image: Barcelona Mayor Ada Colau. (Photo: Blanca Blay via Catalan News)

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