

# EXPLAINING THE ANTISEMITIC

# BDS

# MOVEMENT





# **BDS on Campuses and Beyond**

**BDS is a dangerous front that has opened  
in the war against Israel.**

BDS stands for the boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement against Israel. When Israel's enemies realized they could not conquer Israel through conventional wars and terrorism, they redoubled their efforts to eliminate it through economic, diplomatic, legal, and cultural warfare.

**BDS is a global propaganda campaign, led by  
a worldwide network of anti-Israel groups.**

It is designed to erode support for Israel's right to exist and defend itself, isolate Israel as the pariah of nations, and ultimately cause Israel to collapse as a Jewish and democratic state.

# In Their Own Words

**“We oppose a Jewish state in any part of Palestine... [only] a sellout Palestinian would accept a Jewish state in Palestine.”**

– Omar Barghouti, co-founder of the BDS movement [i]

**“BDS does mean the end of the Jewish state.”**

– Ahmed Moor, leading BDS activist [ii]

**“[T]he real aim of BDS is to bring down the state of Israel. ... Justice and freedom for Palestinians are incompatible with the existence of the state of Israel.”**

– As’ad Abukhalil, leading BDS activist [iii]

**“BDS represents three words that will help bring about the defeat of Zionist Israel and victory for Palestine.”**

– Ronnie Kasrils, South African BDS leader [iv]

**“Bringing down Israel really will benefit everyone in the world, and everyone in society”** – Lara Kiswani, executive director of the Arab Resource Organizing Center [v]

**“BDS pertains to the entirety of Palestine, not only Gaza and the West Bank.”**

– Rafeef Ziadah, spokesperson for the BDS National Committee [vi]

[i] John Y. Jones, “Omar Barghouti – Strategies for Change,” Vimeo, September 2013, at [vimeo.com/75201955](https://vimeo.com/75201955)

[ii] Ahmed Moor, “BDS is a long term project with radically transformative potential,” Mondoweiss, April 22, 2010, at [mondoweiss.net/2010/04/bds-is-a-long-term-project-with-radically-transformative-potential.html](http://mondoweiss.net/2010/04/bds-is-a-long-term-project-with-radically-transformative-potential.html)

[iii] As’ad AbuKhalil, “A Critique of Norman Finkelstein on BDS,” February 17, 2012, at [english.al-akhbar.com/blogs/angry-corner/critique-norman-finkelstein-bds](http://english.al-akhbar.com/blogs/angry-corner/critique-norman-finkelstein-bds)

[iv] Ronnie Kasrils, “Who said nearly 50 years ago that Israel was an Apartheid State?” World Media Monitors, March 17, 2009, at [world.mediamonitors.net/content/view/full/60684](http://world.mediamonitors.net/content/view/full/60684)

[v] Informed Grads, “UAW 2865 BDS Caucus Panel Discussion,” November 12, 2014, at [informedgrads.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/bds\\_event\\_transcript.txt](http://informedgrads.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/bds_event_transcript.txt)

[vi] Rafeef Ziadah, “BDS pertains to the entirety of Palestine” Twitter, November 29, 2014, at [twitter.com/ma3rebya/status/538740175799861248](https://twitter.com/ma3rebya/status/538740175799861248)

## **BDS is fundamentally antisemitic.**

BDS is an expression of the new antisemitism that targets the Jewish state. It claims to advocate for Palestinian rights to self-determination while seeking to deny the Jewish people those same rights. It is ultimately not about changing Israeli policies, but ending its existence as a Jewish and democratic state. It demonizes and dehumanizes Israelis and their supporters, using rhetoric and imagery that often evoke classic antisemitism.

## **BDS has one goal: the defamation and eventual elimination of Israel.**

It seeks to do this by creating bias against Israel among social and political leaders as well as future voters, along with a groundswell of public support for actions that will harm Israel politically, culturally, and economically. It hopes that over time, this and other pressures that Israel faces will lead to its collapse. By seeking to deny the inalienable rights of the Jewish people and targeting Israel alone, BDS perpetuates the conflict to the detriment of Israelis and Palestinians alike.

## **BDS is a legitimate threat.**

It is a well-funded and well organized, global propaganda campaign whose operatives systematically demonize and delegitimize Israel and its supporters.



Photo by Gavin Sullivan © 2009

*"the real aim of BDS is to bring down the state of Israel. ... Justice and freedom for Palestinians are incompatible with the existence of the state of Israel."*

*– As'ad Abukhalil, leading BDS activist*



**BDS is determined. It adheres to its long-term strategy with ample funding, passion, and, most of all, patience.**

The BDS movement does not worry about losing individual battles. It is persistent and returns next week, next month, and next year. They are in this fight for the long haul.

**BDS uses stealth tactics to gain PR victories.**

Activists manipulate and undermine the legal and political procedures of the institution they are targeting, to catch Israel's supporters by surprise. This often leaves no time to mount effective opposition to BDS actions, resolutions, guerrilla campaigns, and street theater.



## **BDS especially targets the U.S., Israel's staunchest ally.**

The Arab League used boycotts and violence against Israel since its pre-state days. After these efforts failed, anti-Israel extremists shifted their focus to eroding America's political, economic, and military support for Israel.



*"BDS aims to turn Israel into a pariah"*  
— Omar Barghouti, co-founder of the BDS Movement



*Anti-Israel "Apartheid Wall" display, which is taken to North American college campuses.*



## The Many Faces of BDS

BDS has reached nearly all arenas of society: corporations, small businesses, the arts, churches, synagogues, professional associations, labor unions, science, medicine, technology, libraries, social media, communities, and local governments. BDS' biggest focus is college campuses, where it uses dishonest rhetoric about social justice and human rights to appeal to young people, who are our future leaders and opinion makers.

## BDS on Campuses

Campus BDS activists work to exploit communities of color, progressive organizations, campus media, and student governments into aiding their malicious agenda. Students from the BDS movement try to create coalitions and political blocs with social justice groups and run for student government, sometimes winning a majority for themselves and their allies.

As a result, dozens of student councils across the United States and Canada have debated BDS resolutions based on disinformation about Israel. These resolutions call on schools to divest endowment funds from companies doing business in Israel. BDS campaigns have also taken the form of referendums where all students can vote to remove Israeli products from campus stores and dining halls, to shut down study abroad at Israeli universities, and more. In pursuing their agenda on campuses, anti-Israel groups aim to make Israel a pariah state in the eyes of future leaders. Even when divestment campaigns are defeated, BDS activists still advance their goal by essentially putting Israel on trial in a public forum for weeks at a time.



*Anti-Israel wall display. Photo taken at UCLA during "Israel Apartheid Week."*



Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) is the most prominent campus voice promoting BDS. It operates a national network of over 150 campus clubs across North America that work together to demonize Israel by sponsoring “Israel Apartheid Week” events and promoting a Palestinian state “from the river to the sea” to replace Israel.

Most troublingly, SJP has been able to recruit allies by manipulating social justice-minded student groups that tend to flourish in left-leaning college environments. Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP), a nominally Jewish anti-Israel group, is frequently called upon to inoculate SJP and its allies against deserved charges of antisemitism by claiming that there is substantial Jewish support for the BDS movement. In fact JVP is a fringe organization, and the vast majority of American Jews support the rights of the Jewish people to self-determination in their ancestral homeland.

SJP falsely associates Israel with the worst grievances expressed by communities of color in America and elsewhere. It often uses euphemisms like the “right of return” to mask its support for Israel’s elimination. It uses highly emotional and inaccurate terms like “genocide” and “apartheid” to misinform the public and promote anger against Israel. BDS activists aggressively campaign for student council seats with the intention of passing anti-Israel resolutions in student government. They seek to create a toxic, binary political environment where all those who believe in justice must support BDS, and all those who defend Israel are considered supporters of oppression.





Most pro-Israel students, on the other hand, do not go to college expecting to have to fight for Israel's good name and the rights of the Jewish people. But due to the attacks against Israel on campuses, combined with the bullying of Jewish and pro-Israel communities by SJP members, increasing numbers of pro-Israel students are becoming engaged in this struggle.

To succeed, these students must be motivated, well organized, strategic, and informed, and they must have the strength of the pro-Israel community behind them. They need education, effective strategies, engaging and informative content, funding, and crisis intervention as needed. Because students graduate every four years, the struggle against BDS must be sustainable and not dependent upon the individual student leaders who are leading their groups during any particular year. As long as BDS remains a serious threat, the Jewish community must develop and carry out a long-term strategy that pro-Israel students can use each year without having to reinvent the wheel every time BDS brings a new campaign to their campuses.



# Defeating BDS

There is good news: Many of the BDS initiatives in the United States have been soundly defeated. Not a single university has ever divested any funds from companies doing business with Israel, support for Israel among Americans remains very high, and Israel continues to thrive despite campaigns of hate against it. Still, to truly overcome BDS, Israel's supporters must invest greater resources in setting the agenda for Israel proactively and overcoming challenges as they arise. We must focus on defeating BDS through a long-term strategic vision based on compelling messaging and education, widespread mobilization of Israel's supporters, and building broad support among people with diverse backgrounds and political viewpoints. There also needs to be greater emphasis placed on civic engagement in order to gain representation in all major institutions targeted by BDS.

Finally, we must use all legal and legislative means at our disposal. This includes anti-BDS bills, like the ones that have passed in over half of the U.S. states in recent years. It also includes holding anti-Israel extremists accountable for violating laws and policies regarding free speech and other issues.



*StandWithUs "Israel Matters" Display, which travels to North American college campuses to educate students about Israel.*



*Countering Anti-Israel  
Boycotts On Campuses*

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TO BDS**

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