

Israel and US Hide Names of Companies Supporting Israeli Settlements

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In December 2016 the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution reaffirming that Israel's Jewish settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) are illegal and calling on Israel to stop settlement activities in the OPT. Resolution 2334 says the settlements have "no legal validity," calls them "a flagrant violation under international law," and demands Israel "immediately and completely cease all settlement activities."

Nine months earlier, the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), in Resolution 31/36, had ordered the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights to "[produce a database of all business enterprises](#)" that "directly and indirectly, enabled, facilitated and [profited from the construction](#) and growth of the settlements."

The database was scheduled for release in December 2017. Meanwhile, the Israeli and US governments have been trying to prevent that list — which reportedly includes at least 150 local and international companies — from becoming public.

"We will do everything we can to ensure that this list does not see the light of day," Israel's UN ambassador Danny Danon told [The Associated Press](#).

US State Department spokesperson Heather Nauert said,

"We just view that type of blacklist as counterproductive."

The UNHRC has reportedly delayed the release of the list until "early next year."

"[Israeli] officials say they are taking the so-called 'blacklist' seriously, fearing its publication could have devastating consequences by driving companies away, deterring others from coming and prompting investors to dump shares of Israeli firms," AP reported.

An Israeli official told The Washington Post that the companies include Israeli banks, security firms, supermarkets, restaurant chains, bus lines, and multinational corporations that provide services and equipment to build and maintain the settlements.

Resolution 31/36 also called on states to take "appropriate measures to help to ensure that businesses domiciled in their territory and/or under their jurisdiction, including those owned

or controlled by them, refrain from committing or contributing to gross human rights abuses of Palestinians.”

Publication of the list of companies would make the UNHRC “the world’s biggest promoter of BDS,” Danon opined. In a statement, Danon said,

“The Human Rights Council has turned into an accomplice of the BDS [Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions] movement and its conduct is both anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic.”

In fact, the BDS movement is not anti-Israeli, as it targets the policies, not the people, of Israel. And actions against Israel’s policies, including BDS, do not equate to anti-Semitism, as I [explain elsewhere](#).

Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS)

Representatives of Palestinian civil society [launched the BDS movement](#) in 2005. They called upon “international civil society organizations and people of conscience all over the world to impose broad boycotts and implement divestment initiatives against Israel similar to those applied to South Africa in the apartheid era ... [including] embargoes and sanctions against Israel.”

The call for BDS [specified](#) that “these non-violent punitive measures” should last until Israel fully complies with international law by (1) ending the occupation and colonization of all Arab territories and removing the barrier wall; (2) affirming the human rights of Israel’s Arab-Palestinian citizens to full equality; and (3) affirming the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their land as required by UN General Assembly Resolution 194.

Israel seeks to suppress the identities of the companies that support the settlements because it is feeling the pinch of the BDS movement. The United States thinks publication of the list would be “counterproductive” because it would fuel BDS, thereby negatively impacting Israel, the leading US client state and biggest recipient of US foreign aid.

BDS was a major factor behind the 46 percent decrease in foreign direct investment in Israel in 2014, [according to a UN report](#). A [World Bank report](#) revealed that Palestinian imports from Israel dropped by 24 percent in the first quarter of 2015.

Several investors, including Bill Gates, George Soros, TIAA-CREF and the Dutch pension company PGGM, have divested from companies doing business in the illegal settlements. Venezuela and Brazil cut diplomatic ties with Israel. [Companies that have pulled out of the settlements and the Israeli market](#) include SodaStream, the French telecom Orange and the French multinational corporation Veolia. G4S — the London-based security company that assists with Israeli checkpoints, unlawful detention and torture of Palestinian prisoners — is selling its Israeli subsidiary due to millions of dollars in lost contracts as a result of the BDS campaign.

The European Union promulgated rules prohibiting funding of Israeli companies based in illegal Israeli settlements and has cautioned about the risks of doing business with illegal Israeli settlements.

Israel Maintains “Apartheid Regime”

In March 2017 a [UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia report](#) concluded that Israel maintains an “apartheid regime” and recommended that national governments support BDS activities to challenge Israel’s illegal system of oppression of the Palestinians. The report was co-authored by Richard Falk, an international law expert and former UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in the OPT.

Mandla Mandela, grandson of Nelson Mandela, concurs. He [said](#) at a November 27 press conference in the West Bank,

“Palestinians are being subjected to the worst form of apartheid.” Mandela noted, “The settlements I saw here reminded me of what we had suffered in South Africa because we also were surrounded by many settlements and were not allowed to move from one place to another freely.”

“What we have experienced in South Africa is a fraction of what the Palestinians are experiencing,” Mandela told Royal News English. “We were oppressed in order to serve the white minority. The Palestinians are being eliminated off their land and brought out of their territories, and this is a total human rights violation. I think it is a total disgrace that the world is able to sit back while such atrocities are being carried out by apartheid Israel.”

Jewish Voice for Peace and other human rights organizations have called for “increasing grassroots pressure on Israel, through Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaigns, until full human rights of Palestinians are realized.”

Nabil Shaath, a senior Palestinian official, said the forthcoming UNHRC list of companies is an “important step” in the campaign against the illegal settlements.

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