

Israel Prepares to Deport BDS Co-founder Omar Barghouti

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Global Research, October 10, 2019

[Mondoweiss](#) 7 October 2019

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#), [Law and Justice](#),
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Israel's Minister of the Interior [says](#) he is taking action to force Omar Barghouti, co-founder of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement, out of the country.

I intend to act quickly to deprive Omar Barghouti of residency status in Israel... This is a man who does everything to harm the country and therefore must not enjoy the right to be a resident of Israel.

[Aryeh Deri said](#) he had directed the Population and Immigration Authority to prepare a legal opinion aimed at Barghouti's deportation.

The announcement comes after Deputy Attorney General Dina Zilber notified Deri's office that it had the authority to revoke Barghouti's residency. The legal basis: a 2018 amendment to the residency law, listing "breach of trust" as a crime which may justify stripping a residency status. Barghouti married a Palestinian citizen of Israel, and lives under the residency status in the city of Acre.

Imagine it – the state "trusts" you to not take it to task for its violations, it "trusts" you to not complain and to accept these violations, and if you protest, even in a non-violent and civil manner, you have breached that "trust".

Barghouti has long been a target for fascistic suggestions. In a 2016 anti-BDS conference sponsored by the Israeli daily *Yediot Aharonot*, then Minister of Transportation and Intelligence Israel Katz [suggested](#) "targeted civil eliminations" of BDS leadership. "Targeted elimination" is a well-known Israeli term for assassination. He merely added the "civil" to make it sound more "civil". Barghouti was singled out by name, and the anti-BDS Czar Gilad Erdan said that BDS activists will "pay a price". "We will soon be hearing more of our friend Barghouti", Erdan hinted insidiously.

Soon after that, the local Ministry of the Interior office notified Barghouti that his travel document (which he has to renew every two years) would not be renewed. It was then [temporarily renewed](#) following legal pressure. Barghouti told Glenn Greenwald at the time:

So we are really unnerved, I am personally quite unnerved by those threats. We take them very seriously, especially in this context. We live in a country where racism and racial incitement against indigenous Palestinians has grown tremendously into the Israeli mainstream. It has really become mainstream today to be very openly racist against Palestinians. Many settlers and hard-

right-wing Israelis are taking matters into their own hands – completely supported by the state – and attacking Palestinians. So in that context I am unnerved, but I’m certainly undeterred. I shall continue my non-violent struggle for Palestinian rights under international law and nothing they can do will stop me.

Barghouti was indeed “targeted”, but so far only by the “civil” means of preventing his travels by bureaucratic means. Lately that has included [US](#) and [UK](#) initiatives, with nebulous holdups and refusals which the governments didn’t seek to defend.

In the US case last April, Barghouti was stopped at the Israeli Ben Gurion airport and denied travel to the US, despite having a valid visa. James Zogby of the Arab American Institute, which had been coordinating the trip, commented:

Omar Barghouti is a leading Palestinian voice on human rights. Omar’s denial of entry into the US is the latest example of the Trump administration’s disregard for those rights.

In the UK case from last month, Barghouti was meant to speak at a fringe event of the Labour conference, organized by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC). He ended up speaking on skype, due to an “unexplained, abnormal delay” in the issuing of his visa. PSC said in a statement:

The unprecedented delay in processing Barghouti’s travel visa application by the British government is part and parcel of the growing efforts by Israel and its allies to suppress Palestinian voices and the movements for Palestinian rights,

The recent move to revoke Barghouti’s residency seems to result from a right-wing incitement campaign by the group Betzalmo (a pun on the human rights monitoring group B’tselem). They [wrote](#) to Attorney-General Avichai Mandelblit and to Deri just over a week ago, urging them to expel Barghouti. In their letter they noted the US’s denial of entry, and asked why the Israeli government has not acted to strip Barghouti of his residency rights. They elaborated that Barghouti harms the state, breaches allegiance and is a security threat:

A recent law authorizes the Interior Minister, with the approval of the attorney-general, to revoke residency for anyone who harms state security or violates allegiance to the state, or endangers public peace... Undoubtedly Barghouti’s leadership of the boycott movement against all citizens of the State of Israel severely harms the State of Israel and is a blatant breach of allegiance, as well as a threat to Israel’s security and defense by pushing for an arms embargo against Israel.

So: The green light from the Attorney-General’s office, a further green light from Deri’s office, and the machine seems set to deport the “traitor”.

For Israel, Barghouti proves that you can’t trust Palestinians to shut up, and that they need to learn it the hard way. But every step that Israel takes in its repressive attempt to silence dissent, becomes another reason to boycott it. Indeed, as Erdan promised, we’ve heard a lot

from, and about, Omar Barghouti. And we're bound to hear much more about him, and BDS.

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