

Targeting Israel with Boycotts, Divestment, Sanctions, and Prosecutions

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Enough is enough. After 61 years of Palestinian slaughter, displacement, occupation, oppression, and international dismissiveness and complicity, global action is essential. Israel must be held accountable. World leaders won't do it, so grassroots movements must lead the way.

In 2004, Archbishop Desmond Tutu wrote:

"The end of apartheid stands as one of the crowning accomplishments of the past century, but we would not have succeeded without the help of international pressure – in particular the divestment movement of the 1980s. Over the past six months, a similar movement has taken shape, this time aiming at an end to the Israeli occupation."

In July 2008, 21 South African activists, including ANC members, visited Israel and Occupied Palestine. Their conclusion was unanimous. Israel is far worse than apartheid as former Deputy Minister of Health and current MP Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge explained:

"What I see here is worse than what we experienced – the absolute control of people's lives, the lack of freedom of movement, the army presence everywhere, the total separation and the extensive destruction we saw....racist ideology is also reinforced by religion, which was not the case in South Africa."

Sunday Times editor, Mondli Makhanya, went further: "When you observe from afar you know that things are bad, but you do not know how bad. Nothing can prepare you for the evil we have seen here. It is worse, worse, worse than everything we endured. The level of apartheid, the racism and the brutality are worse than the worst period of apartheid."

Activist Opposition to a Fundamentally Evil Occupation

In July 2005, a coalition of 171 Palestinian Civil Society organizations created the global BDS movement – for "Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel Until it Complies with International Law and Universal Principles of Human Rights" for Occupied Palestinians, Israeli Arabs, and Palestinian diaspora refugees.

Since 1948, hundreds of UN resolutions condemned Israel's colonial occupation, its decades of discriminatory policies, illegal land seizures and settlements, international law violations, and oppression of a civilian population, and called for remedial action.

Nothing so far has worked. Palestine remains occupied. Its people continue to suffer. Their human rights are denied. These abuses no longer can be tolerated. In solidarity, people of

conscience demand justice and “call upon international civil society organizations and (supporters everywhere) to impose broad boycotts and implement divestment initiatives against Israel similar to those applied to (apartheid) South Africa.” Pressure is needed for “embargoes and sanctions....for the sake of justice and genuine peace.”

Nonviolent punitive measures should continue until Israel:

- recognizes Palestinian rights to self-determination;
- respects international law;
- ends its illegal occupation;
- dismantles its Separation Wall;
- grants Israeli Arabs equal rights as Jews; and
- complies with UN resolution 194 affirming the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and property or be fully compensated for loss or damage if they prefer.

Dozens of Palestinian political parties, organizations, associations, coalitions, campaigns, and unions endorse the project, including:

- the Council of National and Islamic Forces in Palestine;
- the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizen’s Rights (PICCR);
- the Consortium of Professional Associations;
- the Lawyers Association;
- the Network of Christian Organizations;
- the Palestinian Council for Justice and Peace;
- the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI); and
- the US Campaign for the Academic & Cultural Boycott of Israel.

PACBI

In April 2004 in Ramallah, Palestinian academics and intellectuals launched it by “buil(ding) on the Palestinian call for a comprehensive economic, cultural and academic boycott of Israel issued in August 2002 (followed by further calls) in October 2003.”

In July 2004, its statement of principles read:

- “to comprehensively and consistently boycott all Israeli academic and cultural institutions until Israel withdraws from all lands occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem;
- removes all its colonies in those lands;
- agrees to United Nations resolutions relevant to the restitution of Palestinian refugee

rights; and

— dismantles its system of apartheid.”

PACBI states:

“Boycotting Israeli academic and cultural institutions is an urgently needed form of pressure against Israel that can bring about its compliance with international law and the requirements for a just peace.” Israel won’t comply. Why should it when world governments are supportive and complicit and offer Palestinians no relief. Thus, grassroots pressure is crucial. That’s why organizations like PACBI are essential.

So is the US Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (CACBI). It’s comprised of US academics, “educators of conscience....unable to stand by and watch in silence Israel’s indiscriminate assault on the Gaza Strip and its educational institutions.” They call for:

- (1) boycotting all “academic and cultural cooperation, collaboration or joint projects with Israeli institutions” not opposed to their government’s policies towards Palestinians;
- (2) “a comprehensive boycott of Israeli institutions at the national and international levels (including) all forms of funding and subsidies....;”
- (3) divestment and disinvestment from Israel;
- (4) academic, professional, and cultural groups condemnation of Israel; and
- (5) support for Palestinian academic and cultural institutions.

Israel flaunts the rule of law, pursues violence, not peace, and discriminates against everyone not Jewish. Terror bombing Gaza and daily West Bank incursions illustrate its arrogance and intentions. CACBI “believe(s) that non-violent external pressure (through) academic, cultural and economic boycott” are crucial. Worldwide support and unwavering pressure must happen as well.

In solidarity with PACBI, CACBI, and non-academic bodies globally, Australian academics issued their own mission statement, calling on like-minded activists to join them. Others elsewhere have done the same.

Inception of the Academic Boycott Idea

On April 6, 2002, UK professors Steven and Hilary Rose first presented the idea in an open letter to the London Guardian. They wrote:

“Despite widespread international condemnation for its policy of violent repression against the Palestinian people in the Occupied Territories, the Israel government appears impervious to moral appeals from world leaders.” For its part, America “seems reluctant to act. However, there are ways of exerting pressure from within Europe....many national and European cultural and research institutions....regard Israel (alone in the Middle East) as a European state for the purposes of awarding grants and contracts. Would it not therefore be timely” for a pan-European moratorium of all further support “unless and until Israel abides by UN resolutions and opens serious peace negotiations with the Palestinians” along the

lines of proposed “peace plans.”

By July, 700 signatures were registered, including from 10 Israeli academics, but not without controversy and opposition. Questions of ethics and effectiveness were raised. Academic freedom, anti-Semitism, and unfairly singling out Israel as well.

On April 22, 2005, the UK Council of Association of University Teachers (AUT – with support from 60 Palestinian academics) voted to boycott two Israeli universities – Haifa and Bar-Ilan. Haifa for wrongly disciplining a lecturer who supported a student’s writing about 1948 Israeli attacks on Palestinians and Bar-Ilan for conducting courses in the West Bank, complicit with the occupation.

Criticism of the AUT was immediate and harsh by Jewish groups and its own members. Zvi Ravner, Israel’s deputy ambassador in London, said the “last time Jews were boycotted in universities was in 1930s Germany.” By May, pressure was intense, forcing AUT to cancel its boycott, but the idea stayed viable.

In May 2006, the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE) passed motion 198C, a call to boycott Israeli academics who refused to speak out against their government. As expected, criticism again was intense but those in support stayed firm.

On May 30, 2007, the congress of the University and College Union (UCU – created by AUT and NATFHE’s merger) voted 158 – 99 on Motion 30 for a Palestinian trade unions boycott petition. It asked lecturers to “consider the moral implications of existing and proposed links with Israeli academic institutions.”

On September 28, after considerable opposition, UCU abandoned its effort in a press release stating that lawyers advised that “an academic boycott of Israel would be unlawful and cannot be implemented.”

Nonetheless, despite start-and-stop efforts and enormous opposition, the BDS movement remains viable and has taken root globally. In January 2009, the Ontario branch of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) proposed banning Israeli academics from teaching, speaking at, or doing research at Ontario universities unless they condemn Israel’s war on Gaza. After CUPE national president’s opposition, local branch officials removed the proposal from its web site but replaced it with a statement calling for a boycott “aimed at academic institutions and the institutional connections that exist between universities here and those in Israel.” It will also introduce a resolution on the ban.

On January 31, hundreds of Irish activists ran a full page ad in The Irish Times condemning decades of Israeli militarism, oppression, occupation, and violations of international law. They called for the Irish government to:

- “cease its purchase of Israeli military products and services and call publicly for an arms embargo against Israel;
- demand publicly that Israel reverse its settlement construction, illegal occupation and annexation of land in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions and to use its influence” to achieve this;
- “demand publicly that the Euro-Med Agreement under which Israel has privileged access to the EU market be suspended until Israel complies with international law;

- veto any proposed upgrade in EU relations with Israel; (and for)
- The Irish people to boycott all Israeli goods and services until Israel abides by international law.”

On February 1, a new alliance of American Jews for a Just Peace issued this statement against Israel’s war on Palestine:

“Israel recent War on Gaza resulted in worldwide popular condemnation. Perhaps this marks an important turning point in the relationship between Israel and the world community. We will not stand by while Israel instigates a war, annihilates civilian infrastructure, targets civilian shelters, blocks medical teams from reaching victims, uses chemical weapons,” and commits various other atrocities and illegal acts. This isn’t how a democratic state functions, one that respects international laws and norms. “On the contrary, they are actions of a rogue state....fully supported by the US government.”

“American Jews for a Just Peace calls for:

- immediate suspension of all US military aid to Israel pursuant to the Arms Export Control Act;
- the US Congress to open an investigation into possible war crimes as violations of the Arms Export Control and Foreign Assistance Acts in the war on Gaza;
- businesses and individuals to refuse to purchase Israeli-made products that originate in or support Jewish settlements in Occupied Palestine and the apartheid system of racial separation and oppression in Israel/Palestine;
- the Israeli government to sign the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid that was adopted by the United Nations in 1973...;
- the Israeli government to end the blockade and siege of Gaza and allow unhindered access to all humanitarian aid organizations as well as international journalists; and
- efforts by all activists to promote awareness of and resistance to the ethnic cleansing of Palestine, which continues through the ongoing blockade, siege, displacement, annexation, and Israeli state-sponsored terror.”

On February 3, the Chronicle of Higher Education reported that “The only Palestinian university (Al Quds) to maintain ties with Israeli colleges and oppose international calls for an (academic) boycott....suspended contacts with Israeli universities in the wake of the war in Gaza.”

Al Quds has 10,000 students on three West Bank campuses – in El Bireh, Abu Dis, and East Jerusalem. By unanimous decision of its board on February 1, it froze (but didn’t end) 60 joint projects for six months, pending a policy review and possible change. Its statement cited no justification for continued ties and that cutting them “is aimed at pressuring Israel to abide by a solution that ends the occupation, a solution that has been needed for far too long and that the international community has stopped demanding.”

Al Quds’ board called on local, regional, and international academics to support its position

by halting their own cooperation with Israeli universities.

On February 5, Durban, South African dock workers refused to offload an Israeli ship docked in the city's harbor. At the same time, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) called on "workers and activists for justice and peace to join the ever growing movement of people in solidarity with the suffering masses of Palestine." COSATU asked workers globally to follow their lead not to offload Israeli ships or handle Israeli goods in retail stores. It also affirmed its stand to "strengthen the campaign in South Africa for boycotts, divestment and sanctions against apartheid Israel."

Despite its efforts, the Port of Durban used non-union workers to offload the Israeli ship on February 6. On the same day, COSATU and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign affirmed their boycott initiative by protesting in front of the South African Zionist Federation offices in Johannesburg.

On February 6, stopwar.org.uk reported a "Wave of Gaza solidarity action on UK campuses" over the past two weeks at 22 universities and colleges so far. Student demands include:

- providing scholarships for Palestinian students;
- sending books and computers to Occupied Palestine;
- condemning Israeli attacks on Gaza; and
- divesting from Israel and BAE Systems that supplies Israel with arms.

On February 7, the Church of England announced that late last year it divested over 2.2 million British pounds from Caterpillar, a company whose bulldozers and equipment is used to demolish Palestinian homes. It's a small step but an important one, given the Church's importance. Hopefully it will inspire others to take similar steps and divest entirely from Israel and companies with which it does business.

On February 9, Hampshire College in Amherst, MA became the first one in America to divest from companies involved in Israel's occupation of Palestine. It marked a successful outcome of an intensive two-year Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) campaign that pressured the school's Board of Trustees to act. Over 800 students, faculty and alumni were involved. Their efforts worked and shows that other campus campaigns nationwide and globally may as well. This is an important first step.

On February 10, the Belfast Telegraph reported that the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) "launch(ed) a boycott of Israeli goods as part of a major campaign to secure a peaceful settlement in the Middle East."

Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) dismissed the idea but Sinn Fein's Gerry Adams expressed support in saying:...."Gaza has been the target of an all-out military assault by Israeli forces. Over 1300 people were killed, many of them children."

Northern Ireland's Social Democratic and Labour Party's (SDLP) Carmel Hanna said that her country's experience with the "Troubles" should inspire support for Middle East peace. "We have learned from the conflict here that violence does not work and creates bitterness."

On February 19, the Secretariat of the Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions

National Committee called on “all (globally) to unite our different capacities and struggles in a Global Day of Action in Solidarity with the Palestinian people and for a (BDS action) against Israel on 30 March 2009” – as part of a “Global Week of Action against the Crises and War from 28 March to 4 April.”

March 30 actions will focus on:

- “Boycotts and divestment from Israeli corporations and international (ones) that sustain Israeli apartheid and occupation.
- Legal action to end Israel’s impunity and prosecute its war criminals through national court cases and international tribunals.
- Canceling and blocking free trade and other preferential agreements with Israel and imposing an arms embargo as the first steps towards fully fledged sanctions against Israel.”

The time for these actions is now. It must be sustained until Gaza is free, the occupation of all Arab lands ends, the Separation Wall is demolished, Israeli Arabs have equal rights as Jews, and Palestinian refugees get their international law right to return to their homes and property or receive full compensation for loss or damage if they prefer.

On February 23, Amnesty International (AI) issued a press release headlined: “Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territories – Evidence of Misuse of US-Weapons Reinforces Need for Arms Embargo.”

AI found evidence of US-supplied weapons and munitions and “called on the UN to impose a comprehensive arms embargo.” It also accused Israel of using “white phosphorous and other weapons supplied by the USA to carry out serious violations of international humanitarian law, including war crimes. Their attacks resulted in the death of hundreds of children and other civilians and massive destruction of homes and infrastructure,” according to Donatella Rovera, head of AI’s Gaza and southern Israel fact-finding mission.

“As the major supplier of weapons to Israel, the USA has a particular obligation to stop any supply that contributes to gross violations of the laws of war and of human rights. The Obama administration should immediately suspend US military aid to Israel.”

During the week of March 1 – 8, the fifth annual Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW) will be held – last year in over 25 cities and this year likely many more in the wake of the Gaza war and subsequent world outrage. IAW is part of the growing global BDS movement – from Abu Dis to Atlanta, Barcelona to Bethlehem, Chicago to Copenhagen, Halifax to Hebron, New York to Nablus, Washington to Waterloo, and on and on in an effort to make it unstoppable.

Background Information and Member Global BDS Movement Countries

Organizations in 20 countries participate under the banner of the International Coordinating Network on Palestine (ICNP). Formed in 2002, it calls itself “a body of civil society organizations....under the auspices of the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.”

Its mission “is to strengthen the role of civil society in supporting and demanding, of governments and international institutions, the full implementation” of all Palestinian rights under international law, including to self-determination, national independence, and

sovereignty.

ICNP coordinates global campaigns; facilitates communication; aids local organizations; plans civil society conferences; and mobilizes global BDS support. In the spirit of internationalism, it strives for representation on every continent in many more nations than now.

Participating organizations are currently in the following countries:

- Australia;
- Belgium;
- Canada;
- the autonomous Catalanian northeast Spanish community and its capital, Barcelona;
- Denmark;
- France;
- Egypt;
- Greece;
- Iceland;
- Italy;
- Netherlands;
- Norway;
- Scotland;
- South Africa;
- Spain;
- Sweden;
- United Kingdom; and
- United States.

Formal Asian and Latin American representation is noticeably absent, but BDS leaders look for change. They also promote broad international BDS initiatives:

- academic and cultural boycotts by “refusing to participate in cultural exchange, artists, and cultural institutions” to tell Israel that its “occupation and discrimination against Palestinians is unacceptable;” Israel promotes apartheid; non-Jewish voices are excluded; Israeli children are taught to deny a Palestinian identity; Israel monitors this closely and cracks down hard on non-compliers;

- consumer boycotts of Israeli products and services through public awareness, bad publicity, pressuring stores to remove merchandise denoting Israeli origin, and encouraging companies to stop buying Israeli technology; overall, to create an inhospitable climate for Israeli commerce;
- a sports boycott to highlight Israeli oppression and discrimination and to stop its self-promotion as a “fair player” by participating in bilateral and international competition; at the same time, to promote a Palestinian presence in these events to support their right to identity and self-determination;
- divestment/disinvestment in Israel and companies globally that support its occupation and oppression; encourage and pressure individuals, businesses, organizations, universities, pension funds, and governments to shed their Israeli investments to provide pressure for change;
- sanctions - starting with open debate and raising awareness on applying them; followed by implementing comprehensive economic, political, and military measures to isolate the Jewish state; ending Israel’s membership in economic and political bodies like the UN, WHO, Red Cross, WTO, and OECD;
- end cooperation agreements under which Israel gets preferential treatment on trade, joint research and development, and various other projects; Israel’s Export and International Cooperation Institute reported in 2006 that participation of its companies in international projects in 2005 grew by 150% - from \$600 million in 2004 to \$1.5 billion in 2005; Israel is the only non-European country participating in the EU’s Sixth Framework Programme for R & D and gets preferential treatment as a member; many international agreements have clauses that bind participating countries to human rights, international law, and democratic standards; Israel disdains them; it must be challenged and excluded as a result;
- efforts at the local, regional, and institutional levels to build greater individual awareness and support;
- ending military ties is also vital; Israel is a serial aggressor; militarism defines its culture and existence; despite its own technology, it’s heavily dependent on America and other nations for hardware and munitions supplies; breaking that connection can curb its crimes of war and against humanity; raising public awareness is crucial toward accomplishing this goal;
- involve faith-based bodies and institutions in the campaign; explain religion isn’t the issue; morality and human rights are at stake; religious leaders can be enormously influential in building BDS support and enhancing its legitimacy; and
- work cooperatively with trade unions; Palestinian ones faced Zionist attacks since the 1920s, especially from the Histadrut General Federation of Laborers in the Land of Israel; it’s replaced Arab workers with Jewish ones; in 1965, the General Union of Palestinian Workers (GUPW) was founded to organize West Bank, Gaza and diaspora labor; in 1986, the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) grew out of Occupied Palestine’s labor movement; today it’s ineffective given conditions in the Territories and Israeli discrimination against its Arab citizens, consigning them to low wage, few or no benefit jobs; Histadrut represents Jews alone.

The Global BDS movement seeks worldwide support for Palestinian liberation and self-determination. Its campaign continues to grow.

Calls for Prosecuting Israeli Officials for Crimes of War, Against Humanity, and Genocide

For over six decades, Israel has tried to eliminate a Palestinian presence throughout Greater Israel – through occupation, oppression, impoverishment, discrimination, isolation, displacement, aggression, and genocide. The time for accountability is now. Efforts are going forward and were pursued earlier.

On February 3, the Australian Sun reported that International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo “was conducting a preliminary analysis of alleged (Israeli) crimes during (its) recent (Gaza) offensive....” He received communications from the Palestinian justice minister, Ali Kashan, the PA, and over 200 from others, including NGOs.

He wasn’t encouraging in saying that he’ll “examine all relevant issues, including on jurisdiction,” (but) preliminary analysis....is not indicative that an investigation will be opened.” Earlier, his office stated that the ICC “had no competence over the Gaza situation.” The court can only try individuals for crimes committed by a signatory to the Rome Statute. Israel is not. The prosecutor may also investigate at the behest of the Security Council or if a non-party state accepts court jurisdiction. A guaranteed US veto rules out the former. The PA is pursuing the latter even though Palestine is not an independent state.

Earlier in September 2006, Al Jazeera reported that “Three Moroccan lawyers said last month they were suing (then) Israeli defence minister, Amir Peretz, over the recent (Lebanon and Gaza) offensives. Israel Radio reported that a Danish politician also tried to have (foreign minister) Tzipi Livni detained and prosecuted during a recent visit to Copenhagen but the request for an arrest warrant was” denied.

On January 24, Iran Daily reported that 30 “International attorneys have filed war crime charges against 15 Israeli political and military officials including Ehud Olmert, Tzipi Livni and Ehud Barak.” The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) believes the evidence is compelling, including IDF use of illegal weapons and large-scale atrocities in Gaza.

Names of those accused were submitted to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the Hague, even though Israel isn’t a member. Nonetheless, Israelis have been warned to check before traveling abroad to be sure no arrest warrants for them were issued.

French lawyer Gilles Dovers is involved and called for an “open investigation into war crimes” committed by Israeli forces in Gaza. He said 500 complaints were submitted by Arab, European and Latin American officials. Venezuela and Bolivia are preparing their own cases.

Iran Daily said “a group of French lawyers (intend) to file a complaint on behalf of French citizens of Palestinian origin to the French courts against Israeli officials,” and this effort “is gaining attention” in Paris and eastern France. “Coordination with other lawyers in Belgium and Spain is (also) underway....in Brussels and Madrid.”

On February 6, AP reported that a Turkish prosecutor “launched a probe into whether Israel’s military offensive in the Gaza Strip counts as genocide, torture and crimes against

humanity.” The prosecutor’s office proceeded after an Islamic human rights group filed an official complaint naming Shimon Peres, Ehud Olmert and Tzipi Livni. Turkish laws allow for trials against persons accused of genocide and crimes against humanity.

Other efforts are proceeding as well. The Sabra Shatila Foundation issued a petition to hold Israel accountable for war crimes in Gaza and urged people of conscience to sign it. The International Organization for the elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD), Tlaxcala Universal Petition, and International Lawyers without Borders also advocate Israeli war criminal prosecutions.

On December 31 in Global Research.ca, international law expert Francis Boyle called for “An Israeli War Crimes Tribunal (ICTI as) the Only Deterrent to a Global War.” He asked the UN General Assembly to “immediately establish an (ICTI) as a ‘subsidiary organ’ under UN Charter Article 22” similar to the Security Council’s ICTY for Yugoslavia. Its purpose “would be to investigate and prosecute Israeli war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide against the Peoples of Lebanon and Palestine.”

It would provide “some degree of justice” and serve as a deterrent to future regional aggression and a potential “global catastrophe.” Boyle also accused Washington of aiding and abetting Israeli genocide against the Palestinians. Instead of “rein(ing) in the Israelis (by cutting off all funding), the United States government, the US Congress, and US taxpayers instead support the ‘Jewish’ state to the tune of about 4 billion dollars per year....” He calls it “dishumanitarian intervention (or) humanitarian extermination” by both countries “against the Palestinians and Palestine.”

“In today’s world, genocide pays so long as it is done at the behest of the United States and its de jure or de facto allies such as Israel.” Boyle wants Israel’s UN General Assembly and entire UN System membership suspended. He also proposes imposing economic, diplomatic and travel sanctions and for “the Provisional Government of the State of Palestine to sue Israel in the International Court of Justice (ICJ)” for committing genocide in violation of the 1948 Genocide Convention.

In his 2003 book, “Palestine, Palestinians, and International Law,” Boyle states that world governments and people of conscience should organize a comprehensive economic divestment/disinvestment campaign against Israel. It can be modeled after the successful South African anti-apartheid one. The 1973 International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid is the standard. It applies to Israel, defines apartheid as a “crime against humanity,” and calls guilty parties international criminals.

In a May 20, 2002 Counterpunch article, Boyle wrote “In Defense of a Divestment Campaign Against Israel” and based it on his November 30, 2000 Illinois State University public lecture calling for a nationwide campaign. UC Berkeley Students for Justice in Palestine responded with their own. Others followed, including Palestinian students at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, where Boyle teaches. Soon after, over 30 US campuses joined the effort and others later on.

Faculties as well, including at the University of California where 143 professors petitioned the UC system “to use its influence – political and financial – to encourage the United States government and the government of Israel to respect human rights of the Palestinian people” and for divestment until Israel complies with international law.

Last February, the London School of Economics Students Union (LSESU) voted overwhelmingly for its university and the National Union of Students (NUS) to divest from companies that have commercial and military ties to Israel.

On January 18 in the Electronic Intifada, Elna Sondergaard, Director of the Human Rights Program and American University (Cairo) Law Professor, said it's "Time for Israel to be put on trial." In the wake of the Gaza war, she cited atrocities and grievous crimes of war and against humanity that must not go unpunished.

"The crucial question is: To which courts of justice can Palestinian victims bring their claims?" Palestinian courts have no jurisdiction over Israeli crimes, and as stateless people can't adjudicate before the ICC. They're also denied "legal protection offered by classic interstate diplomacy," and pursuing claims in Israeli courts is fruitless.

Sondergaard suggests doing it in other countries on the basis of universal jurisdiction, even though past efforts in Belgium, Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, Switzerland, the UK and America were unsuccessful. She also suggests an "ad-hoc tribunal," similar to what Boyle proposes, and said doing so "would cost the international community nothing." Abstaining, however, would leave Gazans "without remedies and hope" and would encourage politicians and soldiers to think they're immune and can get away with anything. "Thus," she concludes, "we cannot allow these crimes to remain untried."

Nor can we abstain from boycotting, divesting, sanctioning, and expelling Israel from the UN System until it complies with international law, recognizes Palestinian self-determination, ends its illegal occupation, disbands its settlements, dismantles its Separation Wall, grants Israeli Arabs equal rights as Jews, and lets Palestinian refugees return home to their property or be paid just compensation if they prefer. A vibrant, committed, grassroots global BDS movement is crucial to achieving these goals.

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