

<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article8416>



Palestine solidarity in Germany

BDS movement more important than ever

- IV Online magazine - 2024 - IV589 - February 2024 -

Publication date: Friday 16 February 2024

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved

At the request of South Africa, on January 26, 2024, the International Court of Justice, in a first procedural step, judged Israel's war of annihilation against the Palestinian Gaza Strip and its 2.3 million-strong population to be a "plausible" violation of the 1948 Genocide Convention, both in word and in deed. Israel's bogus legal defense that it was only fighting Hamas and not the civilian population was rejected by the court. Six measures were imposed on Israel to prevent the impending genocide, in particular the cessation of all actions that kill civilians, cause extensive damage and the unhindered passage and distribution of aid to people who are starving and deprived of all the necessities of life.

The ceasefire demanded by South Africa was not decreed, although the measures taken together are practically impossible to implement without it. The Israeli government must report on its actions within a month and South Africa has the right to monitor them locally. The global protests against Israel's actions, which constitute outright and monstrous state terror and have stripped away even the last shred of respect for international law, are mobilizing hundreds of thousands, particularly in the global south, but also in the USA and major European cities. From an international law perspective, signatories to the Genocide Convention such as the USA, Britain and Germany are complicit because they supply Israel with weapons and provide financial and diplomatic support.

As part of the protests against the scorched earth campaign in Gaza, the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, initiated in 2005 by over 170 Palestinian civil society organizations, has received new momentum and millions of support. It is directed against the Zionist apartheid and colonial settler state. The call applies until Israel fully complies with its obligations under international law and has nothing whatsoever to do with anti-Semitism. BDS is based on the fight against apartheid in South Africa. The core demands are the end of the occupation, apartheid in the Israeli sphere of influence and the colonization of the West Bank and in Gaza, the dismantling of the separation wall, the equal treatment of Palestinian citizens of Israel and the realization of the right of return of those displaced since 1948 (or their compensation), as it is UN Resolution 194 demands. It is therefore about enforcing the three essential legal positions for the Palestinians guaranteed by international law and numerous UN resolutions through institutional and consumer boycotts, regardless of nationality, ethnicity or political orientation.

Since 2008, the BDS movement has been coordinated by a broad alliance of civil society actors by the National BDS Committee (BNC). The best exposition of the goals and methods of BDS to date by the Palestinian author Omar Barghouti was published by Haymarket back in 2011. It is still valid. [\[1\]](#)

The supporters work within the framework of the principles on the BDS topics and with forms that they consider useful. BDS has already had numerous successes over the years, including against banks, pension funds, companies and corporations that profit from the occupation, both Israeli and US or European. BDS calls on consumers to avoid producers, supermarkets and fast food establishments that support the occupation, produce in illegal Israeli settlements and profit from it. These include McDonalds (which currently offers Israeli soldiers their hamburgers for free), Starbucks, H&M, the Israeli cosmetics company Ahava, which exploits raw materials from the West Bank, among others, KFC, Maggi, Domino and Hut Pizza, Carrefour, etc. Corporations like this are being called upon to divest Sportswear company Puma, which supports the Israeli football team, Veolia and the insurance company Axa. A number of pension funds - including those from Norway and the USA - have already withdrawn their investments from Israel, and Deutsche Bank has sold its shares in the largest Israeli defense company, Elbit. The prison company G4S has withdrawn from Israel. A number of security and spy software companies that develop their technology on the occupied Palestinians are also being boycotted. Many municipalities around the world, including Barcelona, have scaled down or severed their relations with Israel.

For years, BDS has been attacked as “anti-Semitic” by many Western governments, as a continuation of Israeli policy, and has been banned and criminalized. In the USA, numerous states have criminalized BDS. In Germany, in 2018, the Bundestag passed - practically unanimously - a resolution that was not legally binding but had devastating undemocratic effects. Numerous Israeli intellectuals also protested against this at the time. Municipalities, public institutions, universities, museums, the Frankfurt Book Fair and artistic institutions such as the Essen Folkwang, the Kassel Documenta or the Weissensee School in Berlin repeatedly refer to the Bundestag resolution to deal with disinvitations, refusal of space, bans on appearances, slander, dismissals and so on a host of other repressive measures against BDS supporters – or alleged BDS supporters. The denunciation often extends through the busy network of so-called Israel friends, who work in the style of block wardens closely with the German-Israeli Society, right-wing mainstream media (from Bild to Jerusalem Post), the federal and state commissioners against anti-Semitism and the Israeli embassy collaborate. However, many of these disgusting and absolutely undemocratic measures have often been overturned in court. The Bavarian Administrative Court ruled against it in the name of freedom of expression, as did the European Court of Human Rights.

This cowardly policy, which is dependent on Israel and informers, has particularly damaging effects in the German cultural and educational sector, where world-famous authors such as Annie Ernaux, Adana Shibli, Kamila Shamsi and rock stars such as Roger Waters are affected. Hundreds of academics, artists and cultural workers from all over the world have publicly protested against this and are now boycotting Germany, including many opposition Israelis and Jewish voices. Part of the BDS movement is PACBI, the Palestinian call for a cultural and academic boycott of Israel. PACBI assumes that “scientific and cultural institutions in Israel are integrated into a system that perpetuates the unequal treatment of the Palestinian population, molds it into strategies and packages it into concepts, anchors it in laws and consolidates it in everyday practices” (Birgit Althaler) . The Israeli filmmaker Eyal Sivan and the French documentary producer Armelle Laborie have explained the goals and methods of PACBI in the book Legitimer Protest, which has been available in German translation since 2018 [2]

The software expert Ahmed Bashbash, who comes from Gaza and whose brother fell victim to Israeli bombs, has developed an app called NoThanks. [3] Together with BDS coordinators from Barcelona and Ramallah, he reported on Al Jazeera that he was able to record 190,000 downloads in a very short time. In Germany it is now important that the 2018 Bundestag resolution against BDS be consigned to the dustbin of history. However, if it is not overturned in court, it will probably be impossible to achieve success in the near future given the majority situation, a super coalition from the “Left” to AFD against BDS and the self-made trap of “Israel solidarity as a reason of state”.

The situation in the Gaza Strip

“Israel has declared war on an occupied people,” said Palestinian politician Mustafa Barghouti. The regime is demonstratively refusing to comply with the requirements of the highest UN court. The right-wing radical government and the military want to continue “until Hamas is destroyed.” The blockade of the Gaza Strip, which has been ongoing for over 16 years, was drastically tightened at the start of the war. And despite all the protests and efforts of aid organizations, the blockade of food, drinking water, medicine and energy at the two Israeli-controlled checkpoints has hardly been eased. Truckloads are repeatedly rejected under flimsy pretexts because the inspectors don't like something, e.g. tent poles. Literally everything is missing. Right-wing extremist Israelis have now appeared in front of the checkpoints and in Ashdod, Israel, and are hindering the transport of aid supplies with the white and blue flag in their fists.

The continuous heavy bombing and shelling of densely populated areas by the air force, artillery and planned demolitions, which disregard all proportionality and constitute collective punishment, are in themselves serious war crimes. They have now completely or partially destroyed almost 360,000 residential buildings (70%) and reduced the entire infrastructure to rubble. The massive attacks do not spare hospitals and ambulances. Of the 35 hospitals, at

best 13 are still partially operational and completely overcrowded. A number of people were ultimately ordered to evacuate by the Israeli occupying army. Doctors and staff work until they drop, have been chased away, kidnapped or killed by snipers. Medical materials, food and energy are hardly available anymore. 386 educational institutions, kindergartens and numerous UN facilities where people sought protection were destroyed. Over 150 UNWRA aid workers were killed, as were over 100 journalists - often along with their families. Numerous cultural assets and religious institutions were bombed, including ancient mosques, churches and libraries. All universities were bombed or deliberately blown up.

Since the Hague verdict, more than 1,000 people - most of them women and children - have been killed and many more injured, often seriously. The total number - including the thousands of missing people - is now estimated at well over 30,000, and thousands of bodies lie under the rubble in which people search for their loved ones with their bare hands. The number of wounded and seriously injured is more than twice as high. In the past 3 months, 85% of the population has been driven away and pushed together, often violently, into an ever-smaller southern tip of the Gaza Strip - from one supposedly "safe" spot to the next, which is then often bombed and shelled again. Even the primitive shelters made of plastic materials and food sacks around Rafah, where the people huddled together are exposed to seasonal rains, low temperatures and lakes of sewage, are now no longer spared from shelling. The tents from the Red Crescent, the Red Cross, Arab states such as Qatar and UN organizations that arrived with aid deliveries are not at all sufficient in view of the 1.7 million internally displaced people. There is a risk that the Palestinians will be pushed into the Egyptian Sinai and thus experience further ethnic cleansing (Nakba).

Israeli warfare is becoming increasingly dirtier - the arsenal for this has been replenished by the past terrorist attacks and practices on Gaza in 2008/09, 2012, 2014 as well as the everyday terror of the army and settlers in the West Bank. But now it seems to be a sign that the war against the armed resistance groups of Hamas, Islamic Jihad or the PFLP is no longer winnable: collective executions of prisoners, arbitrary detention, disappearances, torture and humiliation of young people and men, even by doctors, shooting of fleeing women and children without hesitation, senseless destruction, and theft of private valuables and funds are the order of the day.

The Palestinian resistance groups are self-sacrificing and stubborn, making clever use of the extensive underground tunnels and the rubble landscape. You have to recognize that they are waging an anti-colonial struggle, although it does not mean uncritical solidarity with the politics of "Hamas". The Israeli army is now trying to flood tunnels with seawater, risking the death of the 136 hostages still in the hands of Palestinian resistance groups. Experts and environmentalists warn that things won't work again potential damage to groundwater stocks. There are indications that attempts have already been made to use poison gas. Very little is known about the resistance's casualties - which are likely to be high - and the Israeli army's droning numbers are not credible. It often has to admit its own losses in areas where it supposedly eliminated the partisans (terrorists for Israel).

Scandalous policies of the federal government in Germany

The movement against the Israeli campaign of annihilation in Gaza, but also against the bloody terror of settlers and the army in the West Bank, must become much stronger. In Germany in particular, we cannot allow the government to welcome the large-scale mobilizations against the AfD's anti-migrant policies, but continue to collaborate undauntedly with the Israeli regime, which has been accused of genocide and has set itself the goal of further expulsion and ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians has. The federal government must give up its illegal and harmful policy of unconditional support for the Israeli regime and hostility to the peace movement, as summarized in an outrageous manner by Chancellor Scholz himself: "Israel adheres to international law, "its army is deeply moral," "I have no doubt about that," "Our place is on the side of Israel" and the like.

BDS movement more important than ever

The scandalous attitude of the Berlin traffic light government recently reached a new, sad climax when, shortly after the Hague verdict, it fell for an informant maneuver by the Israeli government went and froze the funds for the UNRWA refugee agency - just after the USA and subsequently a wider range of countries. According to accusations that were once again made without any substantiated evidence, a dozen UNRWA employees are said to have taken part in the bloody Hamas attack on October 7th. It was impossible to wait for the UN investigation to begin immediately. The US government stated that it had not been able to study Israel's alleged documents, but found Israel's claim to be "very convincing." So much for the rule of law in the "values-based" West!

Even the *Financial Times*, which has now been able to view the Israeli documents, does not attach any evidentiary value to them. For the Israeli government, this PR coup is about countering the ICJ ruling and – once again – weakening the UNRWA. It doesn't matter that the lives of hundreds of thousands in Gaza depend on aid deliveries and that an entire generation of children can no longer attend school. Once again proof of Israel's genocidal policies! BDS can also make a very important contribution against this depraved policy.

6 February 2024

PS:

If you like this article or have found it useful, please consider donating towards the work of *International Viewpoint*. Simply follow this link: [Donate](#) then enter an amount of your choice. One-off donations are very welcome. But regular donations by standing order are also vital to our continuing functioning. See the last paragraph of [this article](#) for our bank account details and take out a standing order. Thanks.

[1] Omar Barghouti *Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions: The Global Struggle for Palestinian Rights*, Haymarket Books 2011.

[2] Eyal Sivan/Armelle Laborie *Legitimate protest – plea for a cultural and academic boycott of Israel*, Promedia Publishing, 2018.
French-language original: *Un boycott légitime*, La fabrique editions 2016.

[3] NoThanks this product is good for You or NoThanks this product is in the boycott list. BNC – the Palestinian coordination for BDS in Ramallah can be reached via the following link: bdsmovement.net. Coordination in Germany, headquarters in Berlin: bds-aktion.de