

Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions: Supporting Justice for Palestine

Compiled by Theresa Wolfwood

BOYCOTTS

Boycotts are one of many means used to raise awareness and create economic problems for companies & countries involved in injustice & oppression. These strategies are used to support justice and human rights in regions or countries where other non-violent efforts and international appeals, including UN resolutions, to overcome actions that are internationally recognized as morally reprehensible, have so far failed to change the oppressor. Boycotts give individual consumers political power and choice; boycotts are even more effective when an organized campaign by social movements and other organizations – like church & labour - creates public awareness about and support for the issues. Retailers can be educated about the products they sell, both privately and publicly. Some will accept the necessity for the action; others may respond only when economic pressure is exerted.

It is also important to act in solidarity, to know that ours is a cooperative response to those most affected; more than 200 groups inside Palestine/Israel and many international groups have called for an international boycott of Israeli products.

Most recently there has been a call for a **cultural and academic boycott** of Israel; that includes boycotting academic and cultural events in Israel, calling on entertainers and academics not to go to Israel and a campaign to stop Israeli cultural and academic workers from participating in events outside Israel.

Here is a quote from Dr. Nada Elia, a US-Palestinian academic & activist, "Alongside the consumer product boycotts, the Palestinian civilian leadership has asked the world to engage in a cultural and academic boycott. This is because there is a myth that art transcends politics and national boundaries, to bring people together. The fact is, art is being used by Israel for propaganda purposes, to distract the world from its genocidal and apartheid policies, projecting instead an image of being an oasis of culture in an otherwise deprived and backwards region. Particularly, Israel is engaging in a "cultural PR campaign," to fix its tarnished image, without attempting to change the policies that tarnished this image..

Similarly, the academy is perceived as a space of free intellectual exchange, when in reality Palestinians are denied access to education, some topics are absolutely taboo in the academy, with severe consequences if one broaches them, and the Israeli academy is fully invested in maintaining the occupation, from the writing of textbooks distorting history, to the architectural design of the illegal settlements and apartheid wall, to of course the research and development of the weapons. Therefore, academic and cultural boycott are just as important as consumer product boycotts. For more info on these, go to www.pacbi.org and www.usacbi.org

CONSUMER BOYCOTTS

These websites have long & extensive lists of products to boycott – many of which are sold in Canada.

http://www.caiaweb.org/files/nov26_2006bdsboycottlist.pdf &

<http://www.boycottisraeligoods.org/modules11748.php>

ALWAYS check the compulsory (in Canada) **"MADE in" label. Israeli produced goods should have a barcode beginning with 729.** There are loopholes in the use of barcodes and re-labelling is not unknown in Canada; these are not 100% certain checks.

1. List of possible boycott focus for Canadians

Mountain Equipment Co-op (a membership organization) carries clothing, equipment and Nike shoes made in Israel. See its online catalogue: www.mountainequipment.coop/Products/product
<http://blog.mec.ca/2009/05/israel-apartheid-and-boycotts-part-3.html>

Ontario, BC & maybe other Liquor Boards carry a line of Israeli wines. A group of Canadian wine writers (including CBC's Jurgen Gothe) returned from a junket to Israel & not surprisingly, waxed ecstatic over these products. There are wines from Galil Mountain Winery, one from Dalton Winery, and three from the Golan Heights Winery, under their Yarden label. More are reputedly on the way. (Gamla, Golan and Yarden wines are made in the Golan Heights illegally occupied territory.)

Naot Shoes are a favourite of many – even progressive people wear them. They are sold widely in good shoe stores.

Educational Toys & musical equipment for children. These brands are sold in Canadian shops. They tend to be well made, wooden & sturdy like European toys: HABA Toys, Sophie the Giraffe, Kathe Kruse, Selecta Toys, Grimm's Spiel und Holz, Plan Toys, Skuut Balance Bike.

For more toy information: <http://www.ape2zebra.ca/toys-made-in-israel.asp>

CHAPTERS/Indigo There is a continuing country-wide boycott & picket of this large Canadian book chain because the owners have a foundation that finances any would-be soldier from anywhere in the world who wants to join the Israeli military. *Photo: Rally in London, UK*



2. DIVESTMENT

Divestment is recommended from these large public multinational, mainly, but not all, USA-based, companies which invest in Israel or have 'special relationship' with the Israel government and support its colonial & oppressive policies. Most recently one USA University and a Welsh University have divested of Israeli companies. Veolia, a French company, has withdrawn from its intentions to construct transit structures in Israel. Norway's Pension Plan is divesting from certain companies. Canada's Pension Plan invests heavily in USA companies making military equipment used to bomb Gaza. Write to MPs and the Finance Minister, he is responsible for CPP.

LIST OF COMANIES that have big investments in Israel.

These companies and their products can also be boycotted. Because they are large, often publicly listed companies, some investment funds, even ethical funds and pension funds may invest in them. Check your institution's holdings – be it church, trade union, credit union or a pension fund – and see if any of these are listed. Work to bring about divestment.

This list is from: <http://www.inminds.co.uk/boycott-israel.html> which provides many details of support & 'special relationships.' Also see: <http://www.mylinkspage.com/israel.html>

A PARTIAL list:

- IBM** (ironically providers of tabulating machines to Nazi Germany, assisting the Holocaust).
- Coca Cola** •**Nokia** Finland •**Starbucks** •**Home Depot** •**Revlon** •**Kimberly-Clark**
- Intel** - makers of the chips that are quite possibly powering your computer (& mine).
- Marks & Spencer**, UK •**Disney Corporation** •**Danone**, France •**Johnson & Johnson & Omrix** Biopharmaceuticals, an Israeli based co. sells in the USA, EU and South America. It signed long term supply contracts with US, UK, Greek, and Swedish gov'ts. It works in cooperation with **J&J**; some of its products are sold under the **J&J** brand name. •**Nestle**, Switzerland
- Sara Lee**, not just cheesecake. It owns 30% of Israel's leading textile company, **Delta Galil**.
- Nestle Switzerland** •**Timberland boots** •**AOL Time Warner**
- McDonalds**, The US-based company has 80 outlets in Israel & is a major supporter of the Jewish United Fund which runs "Fun-filled Summer Family Missions to Israel" in which US families get to "visit an army base and meet with Israeli soldiers".

The range and variety of goods and brands sold by Israeli & global companies which support Israeli government policies are amazingly vast & encompassing from **Gottex bathing suits – sold at the BAY** - to Tommy Hilfiger clothes to Smarties to Minute Maid juices to Evian water to HP foods to light fixtures to internet service to Time and Life magazines to Maggi cubes

to yogurt to lipstick and bath salts to coffee to Kleenex to Huggies and mobile phones. Checking sources of everything is the only safe way to avoid supporting Israeli oppression of Palestine.

A colleague has commented, in reference to all these corporate collaborators, "we never know who we may be supporting, buying little and local makes more sense every day". Please note that no Israeli product has the 'Fairtrade' label. **Fairtrade** Palestinian olive oil is available in Canada – through 10,000 Villages & other outlets.

Coca-Cola has served the Israeli market for 30 years, refusing to abide by the Arab League economic boycott of Israel. For decades, this cost Coca-Cola the opportunity to sell its products in Arab countries. See: www.snopes2.com/cokelore/israel.htm

Prior to 1992, Pepsi had backed the other horse, choosing to service the lucrative Coke-less Arab markets in the boycott days. For its decision to stay out of Israel (and thus itself avoid being placed on the Arab League's blacklist), Pepsi faced continued criticism in the United States. In certain circles it was considered politically incorrect to be seen drinking Pepsi. Coca-Cola is now sold in Palestine.

3. UNION ACTION

Trade unions have the resources to bring major attention to issues with resolutions, lobbying our government and public education.

CUPE BC has printed an excellent booklet: THE WALL MUST FALL. For copies contact: info@cupe.bc.ca

Resolution 50 passed by CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees) Ontario in 2006 & 2007: CUPE ONTARIO will:

- 1. With Palestine solidarity and human rights organizations, develop an education campaign about the apartheid nature of the Israeli state and the political and economic support of Canada for these practices.*
- 2. Support the international campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions until Israel meets its obligation to recognize the Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination and fully complies with the precepts of international law including the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN Resolution 194.*
- 3. Call on CUPE National to commit to research into Canadian involvement in the occupation and call on the CLC to join us in lobbying against the apartheid-like practices of the Israeli state and call for the immediate dismantling of the wall.*

CUPW (Canadian Union of Postal Workers) April 13-17th, 2008 passed Resolution 338/339, in support of the global campaign of boycotts, divestment and sanctions against Israeli Apartheid, a landmark for the Palestinian solidarity movement in Canada. It represents the first time in North American history that a national union has passed a BDS resolution. **The resolution recognizes Israel as an apartheid state and expresses CUPW's support for boycott and divestment from Israel.** It was passed almost unanimously after nearly one hour of discussion on the convention floor. CUPW represents more than 50,000 postal workers across Canada and has been at the forefront of campaigns against privatization and deregulation at Canada Post. The union has a proud history of international solidarity. During the South African apartheid years, CUPW was at the forefront of labour solidarity with South African workers and engaged in concrete actions such as the refusal to handle mail from South Africa. The CUPW resolution was modeled on Resolution 50 of the CUPE (Ontario). The resolution commits CUPW to "support the international campaign of BDS until Israel meets its obligations to recognize the Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination and fully complies with the precepts of international law including the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and lands as stipulated in UN Resolution 194." The resolution states that CUPW will work "... **with Palestinian solidarity and human rights organizations to develop an educational campaign about the apartheid nature of the Israeli state and the political and economic support of Canada for these practices.**" The resolution also commits CUPW to research on Canadian involvement in the occupation. Contact: CUPW National Office at fax ++ (613) 563-7861

In September 2009 - in a landmark decision, Britain's trade unions voted overwhelmingly to commit to build a mass boycott movement, disinvestment and sanctions on Israel for a negotiated settlement based on justice for Palestinians, at the 2009 TUC Annual Congress in Liverpool, by unions representing 6.5 million workers across the UK. The motion additionally called for the TUC General Council to put pressure on the British government to end all arms trading with Israel and support moves to suspend the EU-Israel trade agreement. Unions are also encouraged to disinvest from companies which profit from Israel's illegal occupation of Gaza and the West Bank. Info: <http://www.congressvoices.org/2009/76-palestine/> <http://www.palestinecampaign.org> <http://www.bdsmovement.net/>

4. SANCTIONS are official government or government organization actions against another government. Our government has participated in sanctions against Iraq & has had to cooperate on some levels with USA sanctions against Cuba. The Mulroney Conservative Government was a world leader in the sanctions against South Africa. With public pressure we can change governments or government policies Both the present government & the Liberals have always supported the Government of Israel and have never criticized its occupation of Palestine: successive Canadian governments have given Israel preferential trading status under the **Canada Israel Free Trade Agreement**, an agreement that financially supports the Israeli government's oppressive policies and does not even attempt to distinguish products that are from illegal Israeli settlements. **It was implemented in 1997**, for details see: <http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/E/pbg/cf/b239/README.html>