

Ten years ago this summer, a global movement began to put economic and political pressure on Israel to resolve the Palestinian conflict. 171 Palestinian non-governmental organizations came together with three stated goals: 1) the end of Israeli occupation of what they considered Palestinian land; 2) full equality for Palestinian Arabs who were Israeli citizens, and 3) the right of return for Palestinian refugees. The campaign decided to use three economic tactics: to boycott, divest and sanction. The belief was that, if they could encourage a boycott of Israeli goods, encourage companies to divest of holdings in Israel or from doing business with Israeli companies, and encourage international courts to sanction Israel, the economic blow to the Jewish state would be so immense as to force a political resolution to the long-running Palestinian conflict.

Regardless of how we might feel about the Palestinian conflict, the question is, is this a good strategy? Indeed there are times when boycotting, divesting and sanctioning are effective. Sanctions against Iran brought them to the negotiating table, hence our alarm that countries like Russia have dropped those sanctions far too quickly and not waited for changes in Iran's behavior. Likewise, divesting from South Africa in the 1980s was an effective tactic to end apartheid. And many of us have boycotted local farms and U.S. companies to protest treatment of workers. BDS can be an effective strategy.

But has it been an effective strategy against Israel? There is no doubt that it roils the kishkes to see media coverage of Australians, Europeans and Brits walking with BDS signs, attacking Israel. We might expect anti-Israel condemnation from Arab states- but for the American Studies Association to boycott Israeli academic institutions, for Norway's pension fund to divest from two Israeli companies, for Denmark's largest bank to blacklist Bank HaPoalim,

and just last week for the capitol city of (rake-e-vik) Reykjavik, Iceland to announce a boycott of all Israeli goods; for protesters to stand outside Soda Stream stores in London, Max Brenner stores in Sydney, and Ahava outlets in L.A. because their merchandise is produced in the West Bank, or to watch boycotts of American companies like Motorola, HP and Caterpillar; for prominent people like British physicist Stephen Hawking, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and writer Alice Walker to align with the BDS movement...it is deeply disturbing to us, to see BDS in action.

So has it been an effective strategy against Israel? The answer: not so much. In June, the Rand corporation reported that a successful BDS campaign against Israel, could cost the Israel economy \$47 billion over ten years; but this has been far from a successful campaign. If the European Union decides that all Israeli products produced in the West Bank must be labeled as coming from occupied territories, it is forecast that this could adversely affect Israel's economy by \$1.4 billion a year. But in reality, the

financial impact of BDS has not been catastrophic. Speaking at the Institute for Policy and Strategy in Herzliya in June, Dr. Shavit Matias of Stanford University said, “efforts for boycott of Israel are not new. So far, the majority of efforts of the BDS movement to affect Israel economically have failed, and their macro-economic effect on Israel negligible. In fact, Israel’s status as a “Start-Up Nation” has brought in significant new investments in the last years.” And indeed, some critics of BDS explain that it is the 110,000 Palestinians who work for Israeli companies in the West Bank who are hardest hit. When SodaStream bowed to BDS boycott pressure and gave up their West Bank factory last November, it let go hundreds of Palestinian workers, who were making 4-5 times the wages they would if employed elsewhere.

So why all the turmoil about BDS if it is a failed economic strategy? Because BDS’s real campaign is not an economic strategy, to force Israel to a Palestinian solution. And while there are good people of conscience who want to employ BDS for this purpose, the

reality is that the BDS campaign has become a means of delegitimizing the state of Israel. And the strategy of attacking what Israel *does* as a means to attack that Israel *in fact exists*, is the 20 and 21<sup>st</sup> century expression of anti-Semitism; and that is not about Israelis, or Palestinians, but about Jews. That is about you and me.

And it is in this arena, sadly, the BDS movement has been deeply successful. An essay published by Israel's [Institute for National Security Studies](#) in 2011 (*authors Yehuda Ben Meir and Owen Alterman*) explained BDS's two-pronged approach in targeting Israel. BDS "engages in defamation and demonization of Israel by depicting Israel as a racist, fascist, totalitarian, and apartheid state. This is followed by the specific targeting of Israeli diplomatic, economic, academic, and cultural targets—regardless of their position or connection to the conflict-- in order to incite people against Israel." You and I have watched BDS successes over the last decade. Our college students are taunted during Israel Apartheid week, held on American campuses and in 54 other countries. Israel's

Ambassador Michael Oren, heckled at UC-Irvine five years ago by Muslim Students Association students, the Presbyterian church's vote on divestment, the debacle of a Turkish flotilla seeking to break Israel's blockade of Gaza, the use of international courts to accuse Israeli soldiers and leaders of war crimes after Hamas-instigated conflicts. The publicly-stated exclusion of Israeli scholars, physicians, scientists from international conferences. Just last month, the Jewish American rapper Mattisyahu, who had been invited to perform at a music festival in Spain was asked to sign a statement supporting a Palestinian state. Mattisyahu responded that it was appalling and offensive that he was singled out as the one publicly Jewish-American artist. After the government, Jewish organizations, and others spoke out, the concert organizers re-invited Mattisyahu, stating that they had "made a mistake, due to the boycott and the campaign of pressure, coercion and threats employed by the" local BDS movement. (By the way, Mattisyahu did appear- and he sang songs about Jerusalem.) By continuously

critiquing Israel in every public arena, the BDS movement has belied its “stated” goal of Palestinian progress, and has really aligned themselves with those who seek to delegitimize Israel. And while defenders will claim that the movement is non-violent, the increase of violence against European Jews tells a very different story, of a movement dedicated to fomenting hatred and anti-Semitism.

Ami Horowitz, a Jewish American filmmaker, sought to expose the hypocrisy and anti-Israel activism of the BDS movement. So he took his camera to Ireland, a hub of the BDS movement, and posed as a salesman alternately from Iran, Sudan, and North Korea.

Storeowners with “Boycott Apartheid Israel” signs in their windows thought nothing of buying products from him, even when he would reel off all the human rights abuses of these countries- “you know, in Iran, we stone gay people” or “the bad thing about Sudan is the whole genocide thing.” In his words: “BDS is an insidious, noxious movement that needs to be fully exposed to the public. Its supporters are less human-rights advocates than anti-Israel bigots. I

felt there was no better way to expose that hypocrisy than to videotape their willingness to buy products from the world's most oppressive regimes.”

In Europe and abroad, the BDS Movement has found a home in many trade unions, academic institutions, and leftist political groups. But in the United States, BDS has almost exclusively settled onto our College campuses. There are over 330 chapters of either the Muslim Student Association, or the more widespread, Students for Justice in Palestine. These groups are responsible for organizing lectures and workshops devoted to telling Palestinian history, and writing anti-Israel op-eds for school newspapers. Jewish student groups like Hillel, and now campus chapters of AIPAC and J Street, are put on the defensive, trying to respond. Nowhere are these student groups, with their BDS message, more active than on our University of California campuses. 7 of the 10 UC student associations passed resolutions to support the BDS movement. In all fairness, the vote this spring was to divest from Israel and Brazil,

Russia, Turkey, Mexico, Sri Lanka and the United States- figure that one out, at a public university. Their votes are symbolic- the UC Regents have stated that they will only divest from countries that the US State Department has said commit genocide. Many of you have seen Ami Horowitz's youtube video standing on the Berkeley campus waiving an ISIS flag and getting no response, but being shouted at when waiving an Israeli flag. And while we are tempted to excuse this away- its Berkeley!- the impact of the BDS movement is being felt by our Jewish youth, and by a whole generation of college students.

What can we do, what should we do?

First, we can pay attention to our campuses. Last spring Prime Minister Netanyahu convened some of Israel's biggest American financiers, Sheldon Adelson and Haim Saban, who set a goal of raising \$50 million to fight BDS on American campuses. It's important for us to be vocal supporters of pro-Israel groups on campus, and to be vocal to the U.C. system, as tax payers and as

alumni, about supporting student groups that are allowed a racism toward Jewish students that would not be tolerated against any other student group. Your voice is critical in letting the UC Regents know that their free speech policy must take a strong stand against hate speech. Two weeks ago the UC Regents withdrew a controversial statement and vowed to re-write it in the next few months. Letting the UC Regents know that your Alumni contributions will be linked to taking a stand against the hate speech that your very children and grandchildren endure every day on almost every UC campus is a positive and powerful action. As Californians, as alum, as Jews, we have clout and we have a voice. This is an important time to use it.

Second, we can pay attention to the peace process. At the Herziliya Conference in June, former prime minister Ehud Barak made the case for resolving the Palestinian conflict with a two state solution. Only in resolving the problem can Israel deflate BDS and

the legitimate concerns of Western countries and their citizens. This will leave BDS extremists exposed for what they are: anti-Semites.

Third, we must thank those who speak against BDS. The state assemblies in Tennessee and Indiana have both passed anti-BDS resolutions on the grounds of anti-Semitism. The state of Illinois has voted to divest its pension plan from any company that advocates BDS, and South Carolina governor Nikki Haley has signed legislation not to contract with companies that are pro-BDS. This spring, three pieces of legislation in support of Israel and against BDS were introduced on Capitol Hill. These are important for us to follow and to advocate for.

And if U.S. elected officials are speaking out against BDS, we must speak out too, by educating Jews and non-Jews who might be sympathetic to the movement, that this is not the way to advocate for a resolution to the conflict. This conflict will be resolved through dialogue, international diplomacy, and brokering concessions on both sides. This BDS movement is not an economic vehicle for

people to express their beliefs about Israel and Palestinians. This is a tool to make Israel a pariah state, and Jews a pariah people. The proof of that is that this movement targets Jews everywhere- in France, London, throughout Europe. When BDS rallies chant “Shoot the Jew” and “Jews to the Gas”, it is not a Palestinian state they seek- it is the end of a Jewish state they seek, and Jewish people everywhere. We need look no further than the boycott of South Africa in the 1980s, to recognize that Africaners around the world were not harassed, beaten or vilified, to see the truth of *this* movement.

Friends, sometimes the direct way is the right way. The Palestinian and Israel conflict will resolve when Palestinians and Israelis agree it is in their mutual best interest for success and quality of life to ensure each other’s survival and autonomy. When they find that they are stronger facing Muslim extremist threats from the outside when they are united together, then peace will come. Let us work for that day. But in the meantime, let us work

together to speak the truth about the real goal of the BDS movement.  
In truth, we will not put an end to anti-Semitism. But we can work to  
expose this latest incarnation of it.