



Boycott Divestment Sanctions

The Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions National Committee (BNC) is a wide coalition of the largest Palestinian mass organizations, trade unions, networks and organizations.

Member organizations:

- Council of National and Islamic Forces in Palestine
- General Union of Palestinian Workers
- Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions
- Palestinian NGO Network (PNGO)
- Palestinian National Institute for NGOs
- Federation of Independent Trade Union
- Palestine Right of Return Coalition
- Occupied Palestine and Golan Heights Initiative
- General Union of Palestinian Women
- Union of Palestinian Farmers
- Grassroots Palestinian Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign (STW)
- The National Committee for Popular Resistance
- Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI)
- National Committee to Commemorate the Nakba
- Civic Coalition for the Defense of Palestinian Rights in Jerusalem (CCDPRJ)
- Coalition for Jerusalem
- Union of Palestinian Charitable Organizations
- Palestinian Economic Monitor
- Union of Youth Activity Centers- Palestine Refugee Camps

Press Release

Palestinian Trade Union Movement Unanimously Confirms Support for BDS

25 November 2009

In reaction to reports alleging that a Palestinian trade union official has stated his reservations about the Palestinian civil society campaign of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS), the full spectrum of the Palestinian trade union movement has expressed solid support for the BDS National Committee (BNC)* and for the global BDS campaign against Israel as an effective form of resisting its military occupation, war crimes and apartheid policies.

On November 12, the Jewish Chronicle, a staunchly Zionist paper published in the United Kingdom, reported that the Secretary General of the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU), Shaher Sa'ad, had told a small delegation of British trade unionists that PGFTU "had so little interest in the subject [of boycotting Israel] it had never discussed boycotts, divestment and sanctions (BDS)." The head of the delegation, Steve Scott, who is the director of Trade Union Friends of Israel (TUFI), a well-oiled lobbying front for Israel in the trade union movement, is quoted in the same article as saying, "the only area where the PGFTU did have a boycott policy was with regard to produce from West Bank settlements. Even then, there was concern about whether that boycott could do more harm than good for the 30,000 Palestinians employed there."

On November 14, Shaher Sa'ad categorically denied the above report in an interview with Aljazeera TV, reiterating his support for the boycott against Israel. The following day, in an official speech [1] before thousands of Palestinian workers at a political rally in Nablus, he called again for "boycotting [all] Israeli goods" and "supporting local [Palestinian] products" as an effective "form of resistance against the Israeli occupation."

Whether Mr. Sa'ad made the statement attributed to him by the Zionist media outlets in the UK or not, the fact remains that PGFTU has officially endorsed the Palestinian civil society campaign of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel, since it was launched on 9 July 2005, and has been a member in the BDS National Committee (BNC), the coalition of Palestinian unions, political parties, NGOs and networks that leads the global BDS campaign, ever since its inception.

If the Jewish Chronicle's report is accurate, something that cannot be taken for granted, given the paper's notorious record, Mr. Sa'ad will have isolated himself completely from the absolute majority of the Palestinian trade union movement, including a solid majority within PGFTU itself. Since the above report, the BNC has officially asked PGFTU for clarifications and for a public, written position confirming its support for the boycott and calling on international trade unions to support BDS. Within hours of our letter, PGFTU-Gaza (which forms a sizeable part of the whole Federation) issued an official statement confirming its support for BDS and condemning any alleged violation of it by Sa'ad. Six trade union factions within PGFTU immediately followed suit, endorsing the BNC position and confirming their unambiguous support for BDS. Union leaders affiliated to all political parties represented in the PGFTU have insisted on the need to combat any attempts to undermine the BDS movement.

Furthermore, the largest, most representative Palestinian trade union federation, the General Union of Palestinian Workers (one of the constituent mass organizations of the PLO), reiterated its steady support of BDS and denounced Sa'ad's reported statements as falling completely outside the Palestinian trade union consensus behind the boycott of Israel. The Palestinian Federation of Independent Trade Unions also issued a similar position. It is worth noting that all three federations are part of the BNC.

The Israel lobby groups in the UK and elsewhere have felt quite desperate lately in their abortive attempts to stop the spectacular growth of the BDS movement, particularly among major international trade unions. In South Africa, Great Britain, Ireland, Brazil, Canada and France trade union federations representing tens of millions of workers have endorsed – partially or fully – the BDS campaign against Israel. Many trade unions in Europe, Latin America and Canada have also announced their support for the Israel boycott, underlining the dramatic shift in international public opinion against Israel, especially in the aftermath of its war crimes against the Palestinian people in the occupied Gaza Strip, which were squarely condemned by the UN Fact Finding Mission led by South African Judge, Richard Goldstone.

The BNC, including all three federations representing the Palestinian trade union movement, warmly salute all international trade unions who have endorsed BDS, confirming that this is the most effective and needed form of solidarity with the Palestinian people and the strongest challenge to Israel's criminal impunity and exceptionalism. As in the struggle against South African apartheid, Israel's occupation, colonialism and apartheid will only come to an end when international civil society shoulders the moral responsibility by holding Israel to account before international law and universal principles of human rights, and by treating it as a pariah state, as apartheid South Africa was, deserving comprehensive and sustained BDS campaigns.

Any isolated and dissonant statements attributed to any Palestinian trade union official can never be regarded as remotely representing the Palestinian trade union movement, as it would be in direct conflict with the consensus in this movement behind BDS. We urge all international trade unions to heed the call of Palestinian civil society, including the trade union movement, by endorsing BDS. We further urge all trade unions and trade union federations to sever their links with the Histadrut, a Zionist organization that has always played a key role in perpetuating Israel's occupation, colonization and system of racial discrimination, and that has justified and applauded Israel's war crimes in Gaza in December 2008 and January 2009.

The Histadrut and Israel apologists within the international trade union movement have continuously tried to use partial comments and innuendo by this or that Palestinian trade union official to create a deceptive impression of an imagined “split” in the Palestinian trade union movement on BDS. Today, we reconfirm to the TU movement worldwide that **the Palestinian trade union movement stands united in support of BDS and calls on every TU to endorse BDS**. This is our best hope to end Israel's grave violations of international law and to attain our inalienable, UN-sanctioned rights, especially our right to self determination.

The Palestinian Civil Society BDS National Committee (BNC)

[1] <http://www.maannews.net/arb/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=240140>