



A BETTER WAY THAN BOYCOTTS

THE BOARD OF DEPUTIES OF
BRITISH JEWS' RESPONSE TO
BOYCOTT, DIVESTMENT AND
SANCTIONS AGAINST ISRAEL

THE BOARD 
OF DEPUTIES OF BRITISH JEWS
PROUD TO REPRESENT THE COMMUNITY

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INTRODUCTION

Polling has consistently shown that the majority of Israelis and Palestinians favour a two-state solution to end the conflict between them, a view shared by the international community. The Board of Deputies of British Jews sees its role as doing what it can to support these aspirations, working towards a lasting resolution that will lead to a future of peace, security, prosperity and equality for Israelis and Palestinians. This paper will look at how the Jewish community and wider UK civil society can best play their parts.¹

Some voices have proposed imposing boycotts, divestment and/or sanctions (BDS) against Israel as a means of pressuring its government into making concessions. This paper will argue that BDS is unfair and counterproductive, and that it is not a hopeful, unifying or constructive form of political activism in the context of solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. BDS is a divisive strategy that is aimed at striking at the very legitimacy of Israel. It unjustly places sole blame for the conflict and its continuation on Israel, while ignoring the reality that BDS promotes intransigence on both sides, damaging the prospects for peace.

While BDS may make some people feel as though they are tangibly supporting a cause, it actually hurts some of the most constructive voices on the Israeli side and damages the employment prospects of the tens of thousands of Palestinians who work for Israeli companies on either side of the 1967 border.

The one-sided nature of the campaign is also alarming for the Jewish community, evoking memories of the use of boycotts during some of the saddest parts of Jewish history. Indeed, in recent times the BDS campaign has led to large parts of the UK Jewish community feeling isolated and intimidated.

Too frequently, opponents of BDS have argued against it, but failed to provide a coherent alternative choice. This paper will venture that there are far more positive and effective approaches than BDS, and that UK civil society groups should instead be actively working together for peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

This paper will argue that rather than BDS, people of goodwill should engage in active peace-making. Individuals, civil society organisations and faith groups need to focus on bringing Israelis and Palestinians together, and empowering those in the region who are building bridges between communities. The paper presents a list of concrete suggestions about the kind of organisations that should be supported.

Ultimately, British civil society should not be seeking to import conflict, it should be looking to export peace instead.

¹This document is based on the Board of Deputies submission to the UK Methodist Church's inquiry into BDS in 2013

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This document explores the fundamental problems with the BDS tactic as a means of positively contributing to the search for peace between Israel and the Palestinians. It asserts that not engaging in BDS does not mean that people who care for the region can do nothing. Indeed, the situation compels us to act urgently for a better future. The report will therefore highlight the practical and positive alternatives that we in UK civil society can support together.

1. Towards a Solution: Competing Narratives

This section looks at how different narratives about the best solution to the conflict, might suggest an answer to questions about the utility of BDS as a tactic for achieving that goal. For the minority who ultimately support a one-state solution and the domination of one population over the other, the stigmatisation and division that are by-products of BDS are not of much concern. However, for the realisation of the two-state solution, favoured by Israelis and Palestinians, there needs to be a culture of reconciliation, understanding and confidence building which is harmed by the divisive tactic of BDS.

2. Motivations of the BDS Campaign

The tactic of BDS has a number of underlying motivations: One is to stigmatise Israel and force her hand in negotiations, another is the desire to strike at the very legitimacy of the State of Israel, ultimately arguing for the dismantling of the world's only Jewish state.

Some people are motivated by the perceived 'power imbalance' between the parties, and believe that through BDS they can 'level the playing field' which would assist in negotiations and produce a settlement.

While based on seemingly good motivations of wanting to see a resolution to the conflict, such an approach overlooks the nuances and the complexities of the situation. It fundamentally misunderstands the psyche of the Israeli population and unfairly assigns blame. Moreover, support for BDS places people not on the side that hastens peace, but rather on the side that advocates division.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

3. The Peace Process

One of the premises of many of the BDS activists is that Israel is not prepared to make the necessary concessions for peace, while the Palestinians are. This section looks at the occasions when Israel has offered or given land in pursuit of a resolution to the conflict – never in response to the threat of BDS, but because of the incentive of a peaceful future. It explores how BDS harms the peace process, concluding that supporters of reconciliation should seek different paths to progress.

4. The 'Apartheid' Label

Proponents of BDS attempt to tar Israel with the deliberately misleading label of 'apartheid' as a means of eroding Israel's legitimacy and justifying their campaign. Like many democratic countries, there are instances of discrimination in Israel. While these must of course be addressed, the country is in no way comparable to apartheid South Africa. With Arab populations living in both Israel and the Palestinian Territories, it is clear that Israel's military needs are about security, not segregation.

5. Kairos Palestine: A Reflection

The Kairos Palestine document calls for BDS in the Churches. There is concern about some of the ways in which Kairos Palestine introduces some potentially harmful theological frameworks to the conflict. Furthermore, the document takes a permissive approach to Palestinian terrorism and describes BDS – a divisive and stigmatising tactic – as 'loving resistance.' This reflection seeks to understand the challenging context in which Palestinian Christians find themselves. It ends by finding areas of common ground, and some hopeful ways forward together.

6. Jewish History and the Call to Boycott Israel

Throughout much of history, Jews have been singled out, excluded, marginalised and boycotted. This has been true in both Christian Europe and the Muslim World, and the tropes of boycotting all Jews – whether Israeli or not – continues on some BDS-supporting websites, including those of the far-right. As such, Jews are often sensitive to antisemitic motivations behind BDS, particularly when Israel, the Jewish state, is seen to be singled out and held to a double standard.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

7. The Impact of BDS on the Jewish Community

The BDS campaigners have often inflicted intimidation and discomfort on Jews in the UK. This has been in the form of harassment towards retailers, verbal abuse, disruption to events and performances, as well as the targeting of kosher products.

8. Impact on the UK

In spite of the efforts of the BDS campaign, Israel and the UK have an important and growing trade relationship and the consequences of boycotting Israel would cause significant harm to both societies. Israel is a leader in a number of sectors including medicine, with British hospitals utilising many of the most innovative discoveries to maximise care for patients.

9. Settlement Boycott

BDS activists explicitly identify a settlement boycott as a mere stepping stone to a full boycott of Israel. Such a policy incorrectly places settlements as the key stumbling block, overlooking past Israeli territorial concessions for peace, ignoring terrorism and forgetting the obstruction of some Palestinian leaders. Furthermore, such boycotts sometimes hurt the very people they are intended to help. Thousands of Palestinians work for Israeli companies in the West Bank, often earning significantly more than they would in equivalent jobs in the Palestinian economy. Ultimately, the issue of settlements will be resolved through negotiations, and to hasten a solution to the settlements would be to assist the chances of negotiations through promoting peace, rather than the problematic boycott campaign.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

10. Academic Boycott

The notion of discriminating against academics based on their nationality runs contrary to the principles of freedom of thought and the sharing of ideas that are crucial pillars of academia. Moreover, it neglects the reality that Israeli academics have often been at the forefront of activism for peace and justice in the region.

11. Cultural Boycott

Much like the academic boycott, this is not an expression of displeasure with certain policies of the Israeli Government. Rather, it is an act of censorship against all Israelis, regardless of their views. This willingness to indiscriminately demonise all Israelis – including Arab Israelis – is symptomatic of a tactic which divides as opposed to unites.

12. A Better Way: Invest in Peace

While BDS harms the prospects for peace, there are numerous projects that are bringing Israelis and Palestinians together to work for a better future. These initiatives break down barriers and create an environment that is not only conducive to peace talks, but also makes it more likely that any agreement can be lasting.

It is through supporting and working with these admirable and inspiring initiatives that we can promote our shared aims of peace, security, prosperity and equality for Israelis and Palestinians.

1

TOWARDS A SOLUTION: COMPETING NARRATIVES

In deciding the tactics needed to produce an outcome, one first needs to outline the end goal desired.

Polls of Israelis and Palestinians have consistently shown that both national communities favour a two-state solution for ending the conflict.^{2,3}

A 2010 Jewish Policy Research publication showed that support for a two-state solution is shared by the UK Jewish community: 78% of the community favours a two-state solution to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.⁴ The foundations of this support are firmly rooted in the belief that both Israelis and Palestinians have a right to realise their self-determination and a right to control their own destiny, living alongside one another in security and mutual recognition.

It is necessary to recognise that the likely contours of a successful pact will be less about mutual satisfaction, and more about the balance of compromises on both sides. An agreement reached that brings lasting peace will be greeted with immense joy, but we hope that the signing of a peace agreement and its implementation will not be an end-point in itself. Rather, it will be the beginning of a new and profound process that promotes continuing social, economic, and inter-cultural cooperation. This will necessarily involve the difficult task of Israelis and Palestinians coming together to examine the past conflict and the wrongs inflicted on individuals and populations, to find a way forward that brings two distinct and opposing narratives if not to harmony, then at least to mutual understanding.

We hope and pray for peace, security, prosperity and equality for both national communities. In the words of the Prophet Isaiah, some 2700 years ago, "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Isaiah 2:4)

While the two-state solution outlined above is the preferred outcome of Israelis, Palestinians and the international community, we note that there are others who advocate a future in which neither Israelis nor Palestinians are able to meet their national aspirations.

²Joint Israeli Palestinian Poll, June 2013: The Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace at the Hebrew University, the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.

³Maan News Agency, Poll: Majority of Palestinians support 2- state solution, 06/11/2014.

⁴Graham, D. and Boyd, J.: *Committed, Concerned and Conciliatory*, JPR, 2010, p9

This is often called the one-state solution. This vision is held both by extremists, such as Hamas, who are explicitly aiming for a state exclusively dominated by one religious community, and others who see the possibility of a shared or 'binational' state. A recent poll taken by the Palestinian Center for Policy Survey and Research, has found that 75% of Palestinians reject a one-state solution⁵ while a similar poll in Israel showed a 77% rejection.⁶

In its preferred form, the one-state solution would witness hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees and their descendants being incorporated into the binational state, leading to the end of the democratic State of Israel having its Jewish character and thus rendering the fulfillment of Jewish self-determination void.⁷ Furthermore, the origins of the one-state solution can be found as a Palestinian nationalist strategy to end the existence of the State of Israel. The 1964 Palestinian National Covenant, and the Palestinian National Charter of 1968, clearly call for a one-state solution in which through armed struggle an Arab Palestinian state will be created, arguing in the same documents that there is no 'Jewish nation' and that any ties or connections Jews have to the land are void.⁸ Ultimately, the one-state solution requires the disablement of the State of Israel and thus not only will it be vehemently opposed, it is also a fanciful and unrealistic solution.

Throughout the 1970s the Palestine Liberation Organisation rejected UN Resolutions 181 and 242 as they specifically called for negotiations based on the two-state model. Due to this rejection, no negotiations could take place. This situation remained until 1988, when the Palestine Liberation Organisation opted to recognise UN Resolutions 181 and 242 and therefore accepted the need for a negotiated solution and the realisation of self-determination for both peoples.⁹

Advocating a one-state solution is not a new innovative proposal offering a much needed breakthrough to peace. Rather it is an out-dated notion and a return to a time in which the ideological gap between the parties made negotiations impossible.

Moreover, it is essential to understand the likely reality should the one-state solution be realised. If all security apparatus will be removed, and the Palestinians living in the West Bank, Gaza and surrounding countries are all incorporated into Israel, it is highly likely that there will be a great eruption in violence as extremists seek to attack. As Quartet Envoy Tony Blair has repeatedly stated "the two-state solution remains the only solution" and that "if there is a one-state solution, it will lead to a big fight"¹⁰ noting the violence that would inevitably erupt as a result. Similarly, Arab Leaders have shown their acceptance of a two-state solution with the Arab Peace Initiative.¹¹ King Abdullah II of Jordan remarked "if there is no two-state solution, what future do we all have together?"¹²

⁵Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, *Special Gaza War Poll 26-30/08/2014*

⁶Haaretz Peace Conference Poll, *Despite it all, most Israelis still support the two-state solution*, 07/2014

⁷BICOM Analysis: *The 'one-state solution': a danger to the peace process*, 2008

⁸Palestinian National Covenant, 1964 and Palestinian National Charter 1968

⁹BICOM Analysis: *The 'one-state solution': a danger to the peace process*, 2008

¹⁰Blair: *'There is no alternative to a two-state solution'*, Haaretz, 2009

¹¹Tietelbaum.J *The Arab Peace Initiative: A primer and Future Prospects*, 2009

¹²Akiva Eldar, Jordan's king to Haaretz: *Without two states, there is no future*, Haaretz, 2009

Given the lack of support for such a solution amongst either the Israeli or the Palestinian populations, proponents of the one-state solution tend to believe that their preferred outcome will need to be imposed by force. Proponents of the 'binational' state believe that this force could come through international pressure, including boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS).

Meanwhile, some of the religious extremists are prepared to achieve their objectives by forced population transfer and there are those that call for a 'Greater Israel' or 'Greater Palestine' by which no compromises are made. Both of these proposed directions are severely misguided. They are aimed at achieving an undesirable outcome, and we would urge people to reject them in favour of the two-state solution.

It is vital to examine the motivations behind those who support or oppose BDS. For those who do not explicitly support a two-state solution, and who therefore implicitly or explicitly support a one-state solution, divisive tactics such as BDS commend themselves more than they might for those who want to find ways to bring people together.

On the other hand, proponents of the two-state solution look beyond a peace agreement to an ongoing peace process between two populations. Their interim tactics include confidence-building measures to bridge gaps between the two national communities. Proponents of BDS advocate a tactic which fundamentally divides and discriminates between the two populations, making future reconciliation harder.

This reconciliation does not matter if one is fundamentally looking to a future in which decisions are imposed on a minority group by the majority (as would likely be the case in a one-state solution), but reconciliation and bridge-building matter enormously if one wants a future of mutual trust and respect, where decisions are made to mutual benefit.

2

MOTIVATIONS OF THE BDS CAMPAIGN

The tactic of BDS has two principal underlying motivations which are often linked: One is the desire to strike at the legitimacy of the State of Israel, and the other is to force Israel's hand in the peace process.

2.1 Delegitimisation

The first motivation is an attempt to isolate Israel and strike at the foundations of its legitimacy. In "BDS" Omar Barghouti (a leading BDS campaigner) clearly states this intention in this quotation littered with tendentious terminology: "BDS strives to delegitimize Israel's settler-colonial oppression, apartheid, and ongoing ethnic cleansing... just as the South Africa boycott was aimed at delegitimizing apartheid there."¹³ This position is further exposed by Norman Finkelstein, himself a well-known activist for the Palestinian cause and a harsh critic of Israel, who has denounced the BDS strategy due to this ideological basis. He described the campaign as a "cult", arguing that its true motivations lay in "wanting to abolish Israel and this [BDS] is [the] strategy for doing it."¹⁴

This position is based on a one-sided narrative of the situation that depicts Israel as the sole cause of the conflict and the primary protagonist in its continuation. Moreover, some in the BDS campaign seek to paint Jewish self-determination - Zionism - as a racist concept, that to paraphrase, has been expressed as 'an illegitimate colonial appropriation of land from the time of Israel's inception.'¹⁵

This position is a blatant distortion of history and a disregard for the historical Jewish ties to the land which are deep-rooted in religious and political thought. Even during their exile, the Jewish people retained a constant presence in the Land and the notion of a return to Israel remained a constant aspect of Jewish religious expression, as evident from Jewish liturgy of daily prayer and in the blessings accompanying meals.¹⁶ For example, Psalm 147 declares "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."¹⁷

Importantly, the philosophical foundations of the State of Israel do not lie in religious aspirations alone, but are also based upon the political concept of self-determination and the right for the Jewish people to control their own destiny.¹⁸ This comes after a

¹³Barghouti, O. *Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions*, Haymarket Books, 2011, P.15-16

¹⁴Finkelstein, N. *Interview on BDS*, Youtube, 2012.

¹⁵Barghouti Op.cit p.3-4

¹⁶The Daily Art Scroll Siddur, The Amidah, Grace After Meals.

¹⁷Ibid Psalm 147

¹⁸Avineri, *The making of modern Zionism*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson Ltd, 1981, p.3

history that has been characterised by persecution in the Diaspora, culminating in the murder of Jews on an industrial scale in the Holocaust just for being Jewish.¹⁹

It is important to emphasise that the Jewish connection to the land does not diminish Palestinian rights to self-determination based upon their own sense of national identity. Most Israeli and British Jews support a two-state solution, and therefore the creation of a Palestinian State, because supporting self-determination and nationhood for two peoples who have suffered statelessness are two sides of the same coin. In other words, most Israeli and British Jews do not support the creation of a Palestinian state *in spite of* being Zionists, they support the creation of a Palestinian state precisely because they are Zionists. The attempt to adopt a BDS campaign against Israel is intended to erode the legitimacy of Israel and ignores the reality that both Israelis and Palestinians have powerful and important claims and that both have suffered.

2.2 Forcing Israel's Hand through Financial Pressure

It is important to recognise that not all supporters of BDS wish to strike at the legitimacy of Israel. Rather, their support for BDS lies in frustration at the stalling of the peace process and an objection to the current situation. It is here that BDS represents itself as a non-violent, moral tactic. However, as will be explained throughout, the BDS campaign is not rooted in liberal values and is counter-productive in the pursuit of peace. It is a strategy that harms the prospects of a better future, ignoring the Israeli psyche and history of negotiations (as will be outlined below.) It assigns blame to one party in the conflict and is based on the false assumption that should Israel make concessions there will be peace. Such a view is extremely naive, and for those who truly seek peace it is far better to promote dialogue and interaction between the populations as opposed to divisions.



President Clinton, Prime Minister Rabin and Chairman Yasser Arafat at the signing ceremony of the Declaration of Principles. Wikipedia Commons Image Library

¹⁹Morris, B. *Righteous Victims*, Vintage Books, 2001, p.14-25

3

THE PEACE PROCESS

3.1 BDS: Based on a Flawed Understanding of History

"Peacemaking can never succeed in an environment dominated by mythologies and untruths." – Dennis Ross US Envoy to the Middle East 1988-2000²⁰

As noted above, justification for boycotting Israel is the erroneous notion that Israel is an intransigent force unwilling to make concessions, which therefore requires widespread international action to force Israel to enter meaningful talks. This assertion is undermined by the history of peace-making and the concessions made in the Israeli-Palestinian and wider Arab-Israeli conflict. Indeed, the concessions Israel has made have not come out of international boycotts, but out of international support and encouragement.

Israel has consistently demonstrated that it is willing and able to make painful sacrifices in the hope of achieving a lasting peace with its neighbours.

In 1979 after signing the Camp David Accords (a framework for peace with Egypt), Israel signed the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty. This involved withdrawing from the Sinai Peninsula, a crucial defence buffer between mainland Israel and Egyptian forces, removing all Israeli civilian populations and handing over substantial infrastructure.²¹

Moreover, after Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) signed the Declaration of Principles in 1993 as part of the Oslo Peace Process, Jordan accepted the long-standing offer of peace with Israel in 1994.²²

In 2000, at the Camp David II summit, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak agreed to withdraw from 85%-90% of the West Bank (plus additional land swaps to compensate the Palestinians for land taken by Israel), proposed a resolution to the refugee issue and most significantly agreed to divide Jerusalem, presenting the Palestinians with control over East Jerusalem and 'custodial sovereignty' over the Temple Mount (the holiest site in Judaism.)²³ These offers were rejected by PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, who was unwilling to put an end to the conflict.²⁴

This rejection was then followed by Arafat's support for the Al Aqsa (or Second) Intifada. Instead of calming the violence, Arafat decided to exploit it in a cynical attempt to use the outbreak as a negotiating tool to extract even more Israeli

²⁰ Ross, D. *The Missing Peace*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 204, p.773

²¹ Treaty of Peace between Israel and Egypt, 1979,

²² Treaty of Peace between Israel and The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan 1994

²³ Quandt, W.B. *Peace Process*, The Brookings Institution, 2006, p.369

²⁴ Ross, D. *The Missing Peace*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 204, p.705

concessions.²⁵ The Al Aqsa Intifada was characterised by Palestinian suicide bombers detonating themselves amongst Israeli civilians.²⁶ An example was the Passover terrorist attack in 2002, in which 30 civilians were killed and 120 were injured when a Hamas suicide bomber detonated whilst Jewish families sat for their Passover meal in the Park Hotel, Netanya.²⁷

Indeed, the Second Intifada led to the tragic deaths of many on both sides.

Shocked by the severity of the violence, Israel considerably increased its defensive measures, particularly in the West Bank. This included the use of check-points and a security barrier, which contributed to a near total drop in terrorist incidents. Since the construction of the security fence, there has been approximately a 90% reduction in attacks.²⁸ In 2006, the Islamic Jihad leader, Ramadan Shalah, publicly stated that the fence had substantially hindered attacks saying "If it weren't there, the situation would be entirely different."²⁹

Israel has continued to take risks in the pursuit of peace. In 2005, Israel fully and unilaterally withdrew from Gaza as a gesture to reignite the peace process. As the then Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon stated: "In 2005 Israel will have the opportunity for an historic breakthrough with the Palestinians – a breakthrough for which we have been waiting many, many years."³⁰ Sadly, this gesture was not met with an equal show of willing from the other side. Since Israel's withdrawal, Gaza has been transformed into a launching pad to fire rockets indiscriminately at Israeli schools, homes and hospitals. Since 2005 and before the summer of 2014 there have been over 11,000 rockets fired at Israel³¹ with a further 4,564 rockets and mortars being fired at Israel from the Gaza Strip from 8th July to 26th August 2014.

Hamas has also cynically utilised resources and international aid to construct terror tunnels into Israel from Gaza with the intention of attacking and kidnapping Israeli civilians.³² This is the stark security reality that Israel faces.

In 2008 Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert offered even greater concessions than those of Barak in 2000. These constituted more extensive withdrawals from the West Bank, based almost entirely on the 1967 borders, and saw Israel relinquish sovereignty over East Jerusalem to the Palestinians with the holy sites around the Old City and the Mount of Olives being controlled by an international trusteeship of Israel, the PA, Jordan, the US and Saudi Arabia. This offer was not met with a response from Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.³³

In the summer of 2013, the Kerry initiative saw Israel agree to release 104 Palestinian prisoners in an attempt to show good-will and to entice the Palestinian leadership

²⁵Rabinovich, I. *Waging Peace*, Princeton University Press, 2000, p.154

²⁶Caplan, N. *The Israel-Palestine Conflict*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, p.208.

²⁷Hartman, B. *Massacre survivors mark 10-years at Netanya Hotel*, The Jerusalem Post, 2012

²⁸ The Security Barrier (Fence), IDF Legal, 2014

²⁹The Security Barrier (Fence), IDF Legal, 2014

³⁰Gaza Spokesman: Sharon Speech Reminiscent of Oslo, Israel National News, 2005

³¹Rocket Attacks on Israel from Gaza, IDF Blog, 2014

³²Operation Protective Edge in numbers, Ynetnews, 2014

³³Winer, S. *Hand-drawn map shows what Olmert offered for peace*, Times of Israel, 2013

back to the negotiating table. Most of these prisoners had been involved in assisting terrorist attacks, including seventeen 'with blood on their hands.' One of the first batch of prisoners to be released was Abu-Musa Salam Ali Atia of Fatah, who in 1994 murdered Holocaust survivor Isaac Rotenberg with an axe.³⁴

Ultimately, the Kerry negotiations broke down in April 2014, primarily due to a lack of trust between the political leaders.³⁵ Martin Indyk, former U.S. Special Envoy for Israeli–Palestinian Negotiations, highlighted the “deep loathing” between Netanyahu and Abbas as the main reason for the collapse in the talks. Indyk has also revealed that he felt Netanyahu as having “moved to the zone of possible agreement. I saw him sweating bullets to find a way to reach an agreement.”³⁶

A country that is willing to take such bold risks is not a country that needs to be demonised and forced into negotiations. On the contrary, Israel deserves international support, empathy and crucially encouragement to provide reassurances to its society that it must continue to take such immensely tough and courageous steps in the pursuit of a better future and in the pursuit of peace.

The above clearly demonstrates Israel’s strenuous efforts for peace, and exposes as false the notion that Israel will only make concessions under duress from the international community through extensive and widespread boycotts, which demonise both the population and its government. As Yair Lapid, the then Finance Minister, stated during the 2014 Kerry negotiations “If this peace process won’t work, we should start again and again... Never, never, never give up.”³⁷

3.2 BDS Harms the Peace Process

The previous section sought to demonstrate that BDS is neither necessary nor appropriate to get Israel to make concessions. But this section will go further, and argue that the call for an international boycott of Israel actually damages the prospects of peace, encouraging intransigence from both sides.

Taking Sides

BDS resolutions send a message to the Palestinian leadership and hawks that the Palestinian narrative has been adopted exclusively, and that history has been skewed to omit Israeli grievances, offers and rights. This in turn signals to the Palestinians that they will not have to make the painful sacrifices all parties must inevitably make to achieve compromise, with the knowledge that the international community will simply force Israel into submission. This has the destructive effect of increasing Palestinian domestic demands and rendering it less likely that the compromises needed for peace could be made, because the price demanded will simply be too unrealistic. Moreover, it ignores any previous wrongdoings by the Palestinian side, such as acts of terrorism or the consistent antisemitic incitement that occurs in Palestinian society notably schools.

³⁴Kalmon, A. *Among the terrorists to be released, the murderer of a Holocaust survivor*, Times of Israel, 2013

³⁵Birnbaum, B and Tibon, A. *The Explosive Inside Story of How John Kerry Built an Israel-Palestine Peace Plan—and Watched It Crumble*, The New Republic 2014

³⁶Ravid, B. *Indyk: Peace talks failed due to 'deep loathing' between Abbas, Netanyahu*, Haaretz, 2014

³⁷Hoffman, G. *The Man with the purse-strings*, Jerusalem Post 2013

Encouraging Prejudice

Furthermore, at its core BDS stigmatises Israel and Israeli citizens, arguing that they should be ostracised, marginalised and avoided in a way that few if any other nations or peoples have ever been. Such a campaign is a natural ally to those who wish to demonise Israelis and as is often noted by conflict resolution experts, dehumanisation and prejudice towards the 'other' is a crucial stumbling block in achieving peace.³⁸ Moreover, as was noted in the previous section 'Towards a Solution', the culture of division pursued by the tactic of BDS stands in the way of building the bridges and connections needed to make any peace agreement hold.

BDS Makes the International Community a Barrier to Peacemaking

A further conceptual problem about the international BDS campaign, in the context of peacemaking, is that the international community cannot expect the Palestinian leadership to sit down with Israelis and negotiate while the international community itself puts up barriers against Israel. Similarly, the international community cannot hope to encourage Israelis and Palestinians to engage in any type of meaningful reconciliation when parties external to the conflict are refusing to talk, listen or engage with Israeli citizens. The point is that BDS retrenches and reinforces divisions. It does not support greater dialogue, reconciliation or peacemaking, which should be the goal of the international community.

Strengthening the Hawks, Weakening the Doves

This stigmatisation of Israelis, based on mythology and historical distortion, has the effect of weakening the Israeli left and supporting hawkish elements within Israel. This has been pointed out by a leading Israeli civil rights organisation, the New Israel Fund, which describes BDS as "inflammatory and counter-productive" arguing that, "Anyone who is truly interested in a peaceful, multicultural and just Israel should realize that global BDS condemns these Israelis, and millions like them, to isolation and vilification. In a small and interconnected society like Israel, the blunt force of global BDS penalizes the innocent along with the guilty, pushes moderates towards right-wing nationalism, and spurs rejection of progressive and humanist values."³⁹

Deepening Israel's Sense of Suspicion

A further important consideration is the Israeli national psyche and the importance placed on survival and security. Israel is a country that was born on the ashes of the Holocaust and the country has faced existential threats since its inception, with its civilian population enduring brutal campaigns of terror.⁴⁰ Furthermore, given that no other country in the world is being singled out for such treatment by the BDS campaign, this 'exceptional' treatment of Israel reinforces the sense of racism borne out by the history of the Jewish people, which breeds a feeling of isolation, mistrust and a siege mentality which militates against the desire of the majority of the Israeli population to take risks for peace.

³⁸Maoz, I, Bekerman, Z, Sheftel, M. *Can Talking to each other really make a difference?* in "beyond bullets and bombs", Praeger 2007, p.191-196

³⁹Paiss, N. *Don't Divest; Invest*, Zeek, 2010

⁴⁰Ross, D. *The Missing Peace*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 204, p.24

Adding to Existing Pressures on the Talks

An additional issue that must be taken into account is that Palestinian terrorism from extremist groups (such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades) often increases during negotiations in an attempt to spoil talks and prevent concessions being made. This is particularly true when there are positive developments in the diplomatic track. These devastating attacks are launched on Israeli civilians in an attempt to derail the peace process and provoke an Israeli reaction that forces both sets of leaders to recoil. An example is the Palestinian suicide-bombing campaign carried out during the Oslo Peace Process after the Interim Agreement was signed in 1995.⁴¹

Another demonstration of this tactic occurred in October 2013. With positive signs emanating from the peace negotiations, the Israeli Defence Force discovered a highly sophisticated 2.5km Hamas tunnel stretching from Gaza into Kibbutz Ein HaShlosha built with the intended purpose of kidnapping and murdering Israelis.⁴² The ability of Hamas and other terrorist groups to fire thousands of rockets deep into Israel, including into main population centres such as Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, underlines the real security threat Israel faces regarding any territorial withdrawals.

This point becomes more pertinent when assessing the topography and geographical location of much of the West Bank. Should terrorists be free to take advantage of the high vantage points, much of Israel could be under attack. With this reality, practical and intelligent solutions will be required. This needs flexibility and trust from both sides.

The BDS campaign deliberately chooses to ignore such concerns of Israelis and the real security threats they face.

It is essential that those considering the impacts of BDS understand the way that this tactic is likely to influence the respective mindsets of both Israeli and Palestinian societies. It simultaneously makes both populations less receptive towards risks or compromise, effectively 'tying the hands' of those who are striving for a lasting agreement.

While it is clear that BDS cannot advance the prospects of a lasting solution, there are other actions which people of goodwill could take to advance peace. Civil society and faith groups could work together to support the peace process as will be explained in more detail in the 'Invest in Peace' section later in this document.

⁴¹Caplan Op.cit p.205

⁴²Lappin, Y. IDF uncovers Palestinian terrorist tunnel, Jerusalem Post, 2013

4

THE 'APARTHEID' LABEL

The attempt to associate Israel with apartheid South Africa is a tactic aimed at portraying Israel as a racist, illegitimate state where BDS may make a positive difference. This section will demonstrate that as well as BDS being ineffective and divisive, the linkage with apartheid South Africa is inaccurate and unhelpful.

The apartheid slur is a false label used by BDS campaigners. Understanding the origins of the notion sheds light on the troubling rationale behind the BDS strategy. "It worked in South Africa," they say, "and if Israel is an 'apartheid' state, it might work there as well."

Clearly, this is a simplistic argument which does not reflect the vast differences between the two contexts.

As discussed in more depth in Section 2, the 'apartheid' analogy is part of the attempt to equate Israel (both its ideological foundations and its actions), to racism as a way to undermine its legitimacy.⁴³ The challenge with the 'apartheid label' is that, while it can be suggested in one word, demonstrating its inaccuracy requires more. The following section will seek to briefly address the politically motivated 'apartheid' charge.

4.1 The Origins of the Apartheid Claim

The tactic originated from the Arab States in the 1970s who, in coordination with the Soviet Union and allies in the Non-Aligned bloc, saw this as another part of the cold war politicking at the United Nations. In 1975 they utilised their majority to pass resolution 3379 pronouncing that Zionism was a form of racism.⁴⁴

This resolution received vehement condemnation from many religious leaders. Cardinal Terence Cooke stated: "We must reject antisemitism just as much when clothed with seeming legality at the United Nations as when crudely exhibited on a neighbourhood street corner." Bishop John M. Allin of the U.S. Episcopal Church declared that the UN action was "an inexcusable offense against those legitimate aspirations of the Jewish people for a homeland which the UN itself certified back in 1947."⁴⁵ In 1991 the resolution was rescinded but the tactic remained as a tool to attack the legitimacy of Israel.

The apartheid comparison was given renewed impetus at the United Nations' discredited Durban Conference in 2001. The conference was unfortunately tarred by

⁴³Barghouti Op.cit P:15-16

⁴⁴Sabel, R. *The Campaign to delegitimize Israel with the false charge of apartheid*, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2009, p.5

⁴⁵Ibid

hateful anti-Jewish rhetoric and a clear anti-Israel agenda. Extremist language such as 'Israeli apartheid' was frequently used in an attempt to elevate such discourse into mainstream conscience. Indeed South Africa's then Deputy Foreign Minister, Aziz Pahad, stated "I wish to make it unequivocally clear that the SA government recognises that...[the Durban Conference] was hijacked and used by some with an anti-Israel agenda to turn into an antisemitic event."⁴⁶

4.2 Apartheid South Africa and the Reality of Israeli Society

Israel is not a perfect society. It suffers from strains and challenges similar to those that face many democracies whose population includes minorities. Israel, like the UK, is multi-ethnic and multi-cultural. The environment of conflict adds yet further tensions. However, an objective assessment of Israel shows any 'apartheid' comparison to be wholly inaccurate.⁴⁷

In South Africa, the black population were systematically restricted and oppressed in every aspect of their lives.⁴⁸ One of the most disturbing policies was that black South Africans were forced into physical separation by creating different residential areas for different races. A black person was restricted from performing any skilled labour in urban areas and black people were denied the right to vote. There was segregation in all spheres of life, from park benches to restaurants.⁴⁹

In stark contrast, Israel is a country that prides itself on its democratic values enshrined for all of its citizens, as outlined in Israel's Declaration of Independence:

*"[The State will] foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions."*⁵⁰

In Israel, unlike apartheid South Africa, there is universal suffrage and the Arab minority are actively engaged in the political process. In the current Knesset (Israeli Parliament), 10% of the elected members are Arab, representing a range of political parties. There are currently 12 Arab Members of the Knesset (MKs) out of a Knesset total of 120.⁵¹ Israel has had an Arab acting-President when MK Wahabi temporarily took over from Dalia Itzik in 2007⁵² and Salim Joubran is a Justice on the Israeli Supreme Court.⁵³

Israeli hospitals show no discrimination to the patients they treat, nor do they discriminate in employment. The appointment of Dr. Aziz Darawshe as Director of Emergency Medicine at Hadassah Hospital is a clear example.⁵⁴ Furthermore, Israel

⁴⁶Pogrud, B. *Israel is a democracy in which Arabs vote*, Engageonline, 2005

⁴⁷Sabel, R. *The Campaign to delegitimize Israel with the false charge of apartheid*, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2009, p.5-9

⁴⁸Pogrud, B. *Israel is a democracy in which Arabs vote*, Engageonline, 2005

⁴⁹Sabel Op.cit p.6

⁵⁰Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel, 1948

⁵¹The Knesset: *History and Overview*, Jewish Virtual Library, 2013

⁵²Haaretz, *MK Wahabi first Druze to act as Knesset speaker*, president, 2007

⁵³Ya'ar, *Arab Judge on Israel's Supreme Court: Diversity Rules*, Israel National News 2011

⁵⁴Seigel-Itzkovich, J. *Hadassah: New emergency medicine director*, Jpost, 2013

frequently treats non-citizen Palestinians, including treating the mother-in-law and granddaughter of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh.⁵⁵

Similarly, religious freedom is a fundamental feature of Israel. Muslims, Christians and others practice their religions freely. Unlike the United Kingdom, where talk of Sharia courts saw immense criticism of Rowan Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, such courts operate in Israel within the country's legal structure.⁵⁶ In a region where Christians are being viciously persecuted, Israel stands alone as having a growing and vibrant Christian population, while over 100,000 Christian pilgrims travel to Jerusalem each year.⁵⁷

As Rhoda Kadalie and Julie Bertelmann, two South African anti-apartheid activists, have written, "Israel is not an apartheid state... Arab citizens can vote... no laws discriminate... Israel has adopted pro-Arab affirmative action measures in some sectors." They do criticise Israel's policies in the West Bank, but conclude that "racism and discrimination do not form the rationale for Israel's policies and actions."⁵⁸

4.3. Security Measures cannot be conflated with a Policy of Systematic Racism

Due to the ongoing conflict and the lack of a peace agreement, Israel maintains a military presence in the West Bank. Palestinians who live in the West Bank face a different reality to those of any race or religion living in Israel. The military presence disrupts and impacts on the daily lives of Palestinians. However, there are security concerns that justify these measures, and they cannot in any way be equated to the policies of apartheid.

The context is essential when judging the rationale for Israeli security measures. The security fence, labeled an 'apartheid wall' by some, for example, is not designed to separate Arab from Jew, it is designed to ensure the safety of Israelis, including Arab Israelis, by preventing Palestinian terrorists easily accessing Israeli cities and carrying out attacks.⁵⁹ The security fence has proved to be remarkably effective, reducing Palestinian terror attacks by over 90%.⁶⁰ The reason that roads have been closed to Palestinian vehicles is due to attacks, including shootings and bombings.⁶¹ The road closures remain under constant review by local courts. The inconvenience and the discomfort felt by the Palestinians due to these security measures is a sad reality, and this demonstrates the need for a permanent and comprehensive peace agreement. However, while these difficulties understandably give rise to grievances, there is a fundamental difference between security measures and segregation based on religion, sex or race. Indeed, with over 1.6 million Arab Citizens of Israel living on the 'Israeli side' of the West Bank security measures, it is clear that this measure does not segregate people on the basis of race.

⁵⁵Associated Press, *Haniyeh's Mother-in-law treated in Israel*, 2014

⁵⁶Pfeffer, A. *Why Islamic law is official in Israel*, The Jewish Chronicle, 2008

⁵⁷Times of Israel, *Israel a beacon for tolerance not its serial abuser*, 2013

⁵⁸Dershowitz, A. *The Case Against Israel's Enemies*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 2008, p.29.

⁵⁹Dershowitz, A. *The Case for Peace, 2011*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc. p.99-106

⁶⁰IDF Legal Service Online

⁶¹Alan Johnson, *The Apartheid Smear*, BICOM, 2014

4.4. Palestinian Authority Control and the Bantustan Comparison

South African apartheid was characterised by the limited authority black controlled areas known as Bantustans. Bantustans were severely restricted areas of self-control for black South Africans⁶² and differ significantly from a state. At its core the Bantustans were a tool to ensure ethnic division⁶³ which were opposed by the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants.⁶⁴ While Palestinians currently do not have a state, and thus do live in a situation of restricted self-control, this is fundamentally different to the notion of a Bantustan.

The Oslo Accords specifically state that final border issues as well as control will be resolved as part of the final negotiations.⁶⁵ The Accords speak of a Palestinian interim Self-Government Authority with a remit to begin state-building with the intention of forming the foundations of a permanent settlement.⁶⁶ Indeed, the Palestinian Authority jurisdiction over the overwhelming majority of Palestinians in the West Bank is an essential part of preparing it for future statehood, and the responsibilities that will entail.

Under the current system, Palestinians are able to directly petition Israel's Supreme Court against any grievance they face. In South Africa, there was only a Bantustan 'Supreme Court' to petition.⁶⁷

Finally, Israel has specifically stated that it has no desire to control the affairs of Palestinians. As shown throughout section 3.1 of this paper, Israel has made numerous offers and attempts to create a peace agreement that will see the formation of an independent Palestinian state.

To conclude, the purpose of labelling Israel an 'apartheid state' is not a representation of fact, rather it is an inaccurate slur designed to delegitimize Israel and its ideological foundations.

That being said, like many developed countries, Israel has a distance to travel before it can say that it has completely achieved the aims of fully-realised equality and the eradication of every form of discrimination. In recent years, the British Jewish community has looked to play its part in supporting Israel and its Arab citizens in achieving this equality, setting up the UK Task Force on Issues Facing Arab Citizens of Israel in 2010.⁶⁸ Those concerned with equality in Israel should support this and other initiatives that look to make constructive contributions in this regard.

By contrast, it is worth pointing out that the blunt tools of BDS campaigners' reaction to equalities issues in Israel have taken some fairly bizarre forms, such as the attempt to boycott an Arab-led, Arab cultural festival, purely on the basis that it was being organised by (Arab) Israeli citizens in Israel.⁶⁹

⁶²Butler, J. Rotberg, R.I and Adams, J. *The Black homelands of South Africa*, University of California Press, 1978, pp.37-38

⁶³ Beinart, W. *Twentieth-Century South Africa*, Oxford University Press, 2001, P.217

⁶⁴Ross, R. Ross, R. *A concise history of South Africa*, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p.127

⁶⁵The Oslo Accords - The Declaration of Principles 1993 and The Interim Agreement 1995

⁶⁶Schulze, K. *The Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 2008, p.80.

⁶⁷Alan Johnson, *The Apartheid Smear*, BICOM, 2014

⁶⁸See: www.uktaskforce.org

⁶⁹The Economist, *Boycotting the boycotters*, 2013

5

KAIROS PALESTINE: A REFLECTION

Some recent calls for BDS from anti-Israel activists within churches have referenced Kairos Palestine (KP). While this document is commendable for its reference to dialogue, education and cooperation, it also contains highly problematic assertions that require attention.

5.1 Theologising the Conflict

The KP document itself exhibits a confused attitude to the distinction between religion and politics, with troubling consequences. It is easy to sympathise with its criticism of the way in which religious dogma has been misused in the conflict, particularly where it is used to justify violence.⁷⁰ However, it is disappointing that having made this observation about the extreme fringes of religious Zionism (with the incorrect implication that this view is shared widely in the Zionist movement, when actually it is the position of only a small minority), the KP document fails to criticise how theology has been misused in the Palestinian national cause. For example, there is no mention of the overtly antisemitic Hamas Covenant,⁷¹ couched in religious language, or the theological underpinnings of terrorist groups like Islamic Jihad.

The combined use of “thorns” and “blood”⁷² have the effect of linking the Palestinian situation to that of the crucified Jesus. These images have been used in the past by one of the KP document’s authors to depict Israel as crucifying the Palestinians. In a 2001 Easter message from the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center, its President, Naim Ateek, says the following:

“It seems to many of us that Jesus is on the cross again with thousands of crucified Palestinians around him... Palestine has become one huge golgotha.

The Israeli government crucifixion system is operating daily. Palestine has become the place of the skull.”⁷³

This imagery comes irresponsibly close to the idea of the Jews as ‘Christ-killers’, a theme prominent in historical Christian antisemitism. The Anti-Defamation League, an anti-racism charity in the USA, described this comparison as an, “ugly and false decide charge against all the Jewish people - a concept rejected by prominent historians and repudiated by the Roman Catholic Church and other Christian denominations.”⁷⁴

⁷⁰Kassis, R, et al., Kairos Palestine, 2009, 2.5

⁷¹Hamas Covenant, cf. *inter alia* Articles 20, 22, 28 & 32.

⁷²*Kairos Palestine*, Op. Cit. 5.1,

⁷³Ateek, N., *An Easter Message from Sabeel*, 2001.

⁷⁴The Anti-Defamation League, *Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center: An ADL Backgrounder*, 2007.

Furthermore, in using terms like “dead letter”⁷⁵, KP echoes the discredited theology of supersessionism. Supersessionism, the belief that Christianity’s new covenant replaces – or supersedes – G-d’s promises to His people Israel, has had a destructive role in Christian-Jewish relations. It has been the basis of Christian antisemitism and even violent persecution of Jews. Mainstream churches have now dismissed this theology, but it sadly seems that there are those who want to reverse decades of progress, and use this belief for their political objectives. Indeed, one of the more troubling elements of ‘Justice for Palestine and Israel’ is that it considered, for political ends, reintroducing supersessionism into the Christian-Jewish relationship.⁷⁶

5.2 A Permissive Attitude to Terrorism

It is striking that while KP is explicit in endorsing non-violent forms of protest, it is never equally explicit in condemning violence by Palestinians. It takes what might be viewed as a permissive attitude to terrorism perpetrated against Israeli civilians, expressing “respect and... high esteem for all those who have given their life for our nation.”⁷⁷ The document further engages in apologetics for terrorist attacks against civilians, putting the word “terrorism” in quotation marks, and accepting the murder of civilian men, women and children as a permissible reaction to Israel’s presence in the West Bank.⁷⁸ KP explicitly challenges Israel’s right to exist as the world’s only Jewish state,⁷⁹ never making it clear whether it regards the term ‘occupation’ as referring only to Israel beyond its 1967 borders, or to everything from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.

5.3 BDS as Loving Resistance?

Rifat Odeh Kassis, KP coordinator, describes the document’s call for BDS against Israel⁸⁰ as a form of ‘loving resistance.’⁸¹ However, it seems impossible for a divisive tactic like BDS, which indiscriminately targets an entire nation regardless of individual’s views, as in any way ‘loving’. A truly loving response must involve recognising and appreciating the ‘other’, not marginalising and denigrating, or indeed wilfully misunderstanding him or her.

5.4 The Context

There is a possible explanation for KP’s selective attitude towards harmful theologies & its permissive approach to Palestinian terrorism while simultaneously advocating non-violence. That explanation is the fear of retribution from armed Palestinian groups. The Palestinian Christian community finds itself caught in the middle of a very difficult situation: Israel’s military presence on the one hand, and intolerant manifestations of Islamism on the other.

⁷⁵*Kairos Palestine*, Op. Cit. 2.2.2

⁷⁶Hucklesby, S. et al, *Justice for Palestine and Israel*, 2010, 3.4

⁷⁷*Kairos Palestine*, Op. Cit. 4.2.5.

⁷⁸*Ibid*, 4.3

⁷⁹*Ibid*, 9.3

⁸⁰*Ibid*, 4.2.6; 6.3; 7.

⁸¹*Kairos for Palestine*, Kassis, Rifat Odeh, Badayl/Alternatives, Palestine, 2011, Pp. 108-109,

Islamic extremism however has been notably excused by Rifat Odeh Kassis in his book, *Kairos for Palestine*, by essentially blaming others: "I genuinely believe that Muslim fundamentalism is a reaction and response to [Jewish fundamentalism and Christian Zionism]."⁸² However, upon examination these attacks on the Christian community appear less about any form of Jewish theology or Christian Zionism, but rather, they mirror the crosswinds of anti-Christian fanaticism that is driving Christians from their homes in Iraq, Egypt, Pakistan and Nigeria.⁸³

For example, in 2005, fourteen Palestinian Christian homes in the West Bank town of Taybeh were set on fire by a mob from the nearby town of Dir Jarir, after a suspected romantic affair between a Palestinian Christian and Palestinian Muslim. Buthaina Sha'aban, a Taybeh resident and sister of the town's mayor, said, "They vandalized parked cars and beat village residents... We urge all international, Israeli and Palestinian actors to intervene and protect village residents from the... rage."⁸⁴ Similarly, in 2006, following comments by Pope Benedict XVI about Islam, five churches of different denominations were firebombed and shot at in the West Bank and Gaza. Responsibility was claimed by a group calling itself "Lions of Monotheism."⁸⁵ Meanwhile, in 2007, Baptist Christian bookseller Rami Ayyad was murdered, six months after his bookstore (the only Christian bookstore in Gaza) was fire-bombed. A group calling itself the "Righteous Swords of Islam" claimed responsibility.⁸⁶

For Kassis, part of the context for the creation of KP is how, especially in the light of wars such as in Iraq and Afghanistan, some Muslims "question Christians' dedication, loyalty and commitment."⁸⁷ Kassis sees Kairos Palestine as an opportunity for Palestinian Christians to prove themselves, "After so much time wasted on the periphery...it is time for the church to play a vital role in this struggle...Kairos Palestine creates the momentum we need."⁸⁸

5.5 Towards a Common Endeavour

There are, however, positive elements of the KP document as it does raise awareness of the concerns of the Christian communities in Israel and the Palestinian Territories, which have so far received little attention. KP does urge people of all religions and all ethnicities to come together and find points of common ground, and it emphasises the importance of education in reconciliation. These latter features are points of common ground and common assent, which would be a better means of engagement than BDS.

⁸²*Kairos for Palestine*, Op. Cit. Pp. 68-69

⁸³Powers, K. *A Global Slaughter of Christians, but America's Churches Stay Silent*, The Daily Beast, 2013

⁸⁴Regular, A., *Muslims Torch 14 Christian Homes Near Ramallah*, Haaretz, 2005

⁸⁵Haaretz, *Report: Rome tightens pope's security after fury over Islam remarks*, 2006

⁸⁶Silver, E., *Gaza's Christian Bookseller Killed*, The Independent, 8 October 2007

⁸⁷*Kairos for Palestine*, Op. Cit. P.72

⁸⁸*Ibid.*P.76-77,

6

JEWISH HISTORY AND THE CALL TO BOYCOTT ISRAEL



Nazi Boycott of Jewish Shops. Adam Jones, Flickr

In understanding the likely impact of individuals singling out the Jewish state for an unprecedented boycott, it is important to understand the Jewish community's sensitivities based on Jewish history. The obsessive and often blinkered nature of the campaign makes the call to boycott Israel, a democratic state that has consistently made efforts for peace, particularly disturbing for the Jewish community. Among all countries, Israel is singled out for boycott. Given the many atrocious acts occurring throughout the world, the Jewish community is entitled to ask if the exceptional targeting of the world's only Jewish state is because of something uniquely evil and unprecedented, or because of the persistent resilience of one of the world's oldest forms of hatred.

To boycott is to exclude, ostracise and isolate. Terms that can be used to describe much of Jewish experience in exile from the ancestral homeland of Israel.

In Christian-led Europe, Jews have at times flourished, but at others have been severely persecuted. In 1290 in England, after a series of laws specifically prohibiting Jewish activities and the instigation of violent anti-Jewish riots, the Jews were expelled.⁸⁹ This was not an isolated experience. Jews were marginalised and persecuted in numerous European countries, including the wholesale expulsion of Spain's Jews in 1492.⁹⁰

⁸⁹Julius, A. *Trials of the diaspora*, Oxford University Press, 2010, p.107.

⁹⁰Jewish Virtual Library, The Spanish Expulsion

Boycotts and calls for separation were common tactics utilised by several Popes to leverage money from Jewish populations, including forcing Jews to surrender mortgaged property to the Church.⁹¹

In the Reformation era, Martin Luther's infamous book 'On the Jews and Their Lies' is an example of the prevalent antisemitic feeling and of how Christians were encouraged to avoid and harm Jews. Luther called on the faithful to "set fire to their [Jews] synagogues or schools and to bury and cover with dirt whatever will not burn" and to "deny safe conduct on the highways... let them stay at home." Regarding the Jews, he further preached that "Our rulers... must act like good physicians who when gangrene has set in proceed without mercy to cut, saw, and burn flesh."⁹²

In the Enlightenment period, Jews were in the most part finally able to interact with the rest of European society as equals. However, while substantial freedoms were granted and greater integration of the Jews was enabled, the persistence of marginalisation and boycott continued through university admissions, which also affected non-conformist Christians, as well as Parliament and, until relatively recently, even English golf clubs.⁹³

Indeed, the boycotting of Jewish businesses was among the first discriminatory legislation enacted by the Nazis, soon after Hitler came to power in 1933. Meanwhile, the fascist movement in London at this time protested and intimidated customers going into Jewish shops.⁹⁴

The boycott of Israel itself and the Jews living in the region even before the establishment of Israel is also of relevance. After the massacre of Jews in Hebron in 1929, the Muslim Supreme Council called for all Jewish businesses to be boycotted.⁹⁵ A boycott of Jewish shops was widespread across the Middle East throughout the 20th Century. After the establishment of the State of Israel, the Arab states enacted the infamous Arab boycott of Israel. But it went further than Israel, as it specified that Arab states could not do business with "Zionists/Jews." In Saudi Arabia in 1952, regulations prohibited imports from companies controlled by, or who employed, Jews. The USA made it illegal to cooperate with this boycott in the 1970s. However, European countries would not risk their business interests and did not oppose the boycott. British companies, for example, were known to dismiss Jewish employees

⁹¹Julius, Op.cit p.478

⁹²Jewish Virtual Library, *Martin Luther – Jews and their lies*

⁹³The Economist, *In Search of the Green*, 2013

⁹⁴Julius, Op.cit p.480-481

⁹⁵Julius, Op.cit p.481

and encouraged Jewish directors to resign at the request of boycotting Arab states.⁹⁶ For a number of Arab states this boycott policy remains to this day and an example recently surfaced regarding contracts between Transport for London and the Emirates cable car over the Thames.⁹⁷

In the current BDS campaign, while some are clear to distinguish between Israeli and Jewish products, others, particularly Islamist extremists and far right activists, conflate the two and boycott on the basis of Jews and Judaism itself.

For example, on Ummah.com, which describes itself as the “online Muslim community,” one thread, dated June 2010, is called, “How many of you boycott Jewish products / companies / brands??”⁹⁸ In the thread, one forum-user, called ‘Medjool’, asks, “I have recently seen a huge list of jewish owned companies that I’m sure we’ve all used at some point... I was shocked at much they have managed own... my question is how many of you are boycotting known jewish owned companies?”

After some posts by other users, ‘Medjool’ seeks to assist those who would like to advance this boycott with a long list of companies, captioned with the heading, “The following companies/corporations are either jewish owned or sympathetic to jewish interests... we can use economic warfare to erode at the jewish monopoly of power...”

A Google search on the heading reveals ‘Medjool’s’ source – neo-Nazi website Stormfront.org – where forum-user ‘NordicPower88’ shares, “I have compiled a list of jewish businesses in the US and UK. Many of these were freely available from Arabic websites who are also boycotting the jews” dating from 2003, which then offers the same list.⁹⁹ It is tragic that this partnership between Neo-Nazis and radical Muslims has been forged around antisemitism and BDS.

This brief history shows the sensitivity that the Jewish community holds towards boycotts, and this history is not lost on a number of the BDS supporters.

⁹⁶Julius, Op.cit p.482

⁹⁷Muir, H. “*Trouble ahead? How the great Thames cable car fiasco might claim more victims*” The Guardian Online, 2013

⁹⁸Ummah.com Thread: *How many of you boycott Jewish products / companies / brands??* 2010

⁹⁹Stormfront.org *Boycott Jewish Businesses!*, 2003

Stop
Terrorism!
ISRAEL IS
A
TERRORIST
STATE

SAVE
GAZA!!!

Stop
ISRAEL!

HITLER YOU WERE
Right!

STOP
ISRAELI
TERRORISM



Activists at an anti-Israel Protest. CST

HATE CRIME

'CHEMICAL' ATTACK ON STALL GIRL

EXCLUSIVE by CAMERON HAY

A TEENAGE stall worker had a "burning" chemical poured over her in a hate attack.

Iona Georgianna, 18, feared her face was "melting" after yobs chucked the mystery liquid.

It's believed she was targeted by pro-Palestinian supporters because she works for an Israeli cosmetics firm.

Last night Iona said: "I was working and then I felt liquid on my head.

"It started to burn. It felt like my face was melting. I was screaming.

"I couldn't feel my lips and my vision was blurred for two or three minutes."

Iona's quick-thinking colleague Gosia Wachnik, 22, rushed to her aid and tipped five litres of water over her to wash away the substance.

Gosia, from Edinburgh, said: "I could smell the liquid almost immediately and knew this was not good."

Iona was doing a shift at the Kedem stall in Glasgow's St Enoch Centre



Targeted . . . Kedem stall in St Enoch Centre

when the sick yobs struck last Saturday. Romanian Iona, who moved to Scotland from Greece a month ago, added: "Since I've been here people have been so friendly. That's why I'm so shocked."

Palestinian campaigners have been handing out leaflets in the city centre over the past month as part of a lawful protest against the stall.

Chief Inspector Mark Sutherland said: "This has been recorded as a racist incident and enquiries are continuing."

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7

THE IMPACT OF BDS ON THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

It has become a regular feature of daily life for members of the UK Jewish community to experience discomfort and intimidation at the hands of BDS activists.

7.1 Retailers

A frequent tactic by BDS campaigners in supermarkets is to noisily and aggressively remove all Israeli products and place them into a trolley. However, the boycotters have not only targeted Israeli produce but also the Kosher food section. A Birmingham BDS activist was recorded as saying "It went really well... [we] filled a massive trolley, tipped tons of stuff in, dates, peppers, loads of kosher stuff, wine, stickered everything...and left all our stuff with a big sign saying 'boycott Israeli goods'...yeah, it was really good."¹⁰⁰

During the 2014 conflict between Israel and Hamas the intimidation reached new levels. Arrests were made after an anti-Israel group destroyed products and threatened staff and customers in a Tesco Birmingham store,¹⁰¹ and after witnessing the mayhem BDS activists had caused in other branches and retailers across the country, the management of Sainsbury's London Holborn branch pre-emptively removed all kosher food items. This was a measure taken to prevent the activists ruining the products and causing disruption. After the incident Sainsbury's apologised for taking such actions, while MPs criticised Sainsbury's for succumbing to "bullies and thugs."¹⁰²

The situation at this time became so severe that a group of Manchester shop workers, with support from councillors and business officials, held protests against the actions of the BDS demonstrators.

Councillors stated that staff of high-street shops were being "bullied and intimidated" by BDS activists, who slammed against shop windows and screamed abuse.

Pat Karney, a Labour councillor, said: "They come down here on Saturdays, bang on the windows, frighten the workers and the shoppers and claim that the workers in there are part of some Zionist plot in Israel. It is complete utter fantasy delusional politics." "It is extremists who are preaching revolution here on Market Street. Well they need to read Karl Marx. He said mobilise the workers not *attack* the workers."¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰Gardner, M. CST Blog, 2013

¹⁰¹Dysch, M. *Never again: Sainsbury's pledge over removing kosher food*, The Jewish Chronicle, 2014

¹⁰²Dysch, M. *Never again: Sainsbury's pledge over removing kosher food*, The Jewish Chronicle, 2014

¹⁰³Smith, D. *Shop workers in Manchester say they are 'intimidated' by pro-Palestinian protesters*, The Guardian, 2014

This experience has led to the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDaW) to criticise their actions saying “Shop workers should be able to go to work free from fear of violence, threats and abuse.”¹⁰⁴

The demonstrations outside Kedem, a store that sells Israeli beauty products in Manchester, were particularly fierce. BDS supporters taunted Jewish counter-protestors about Israelis who had been killed in Gaza and accused them of “loving Hitler.” There, was further antisemitic abuse such as screaming “Jews killed Jesus” and “Death to Jews.”¹⁰⁵

Violence and harassment were also experienced in Glasgow’s St Enoch Mall. On October 25th 2014 a teenage worker at the Kedem stall was doused in a chemical liquid by an attacker.¹⁰⁶

The impact on the Jewish community is also felt as some boycotts deliberately and openly target perceived ‘Jewish’ businesses, on the basis that they supposedly ‘support Israel.’ One example of this is the Innovative Minds boycott of Starbucks, which is not an Israeli or ‘Jewish’ business; but has a Jewish chairman. The boycott is justified on the tenuous grounds that the chairman supports Israel.¹⁰⁷

7.2 Public Events

In 2012, Habima, an Israeli theatre company, performed at the Globe Theatre. The BDS protestors were not content to exercise their democratic right of disapproval by protesting outside the venue, instead they infiltrated the event and disrupted the performance, screaming and hurling abuse. Six of the BDS activists had to be physically removed from the theatre and one protestor was arrested outside on suspicion of assault.¹⁰⁸ Further examples of this behaviour will be outlined in the ‘Cultural Boycott’ section.

The BDS campaign in 2014 extensively lobbied the Tricycle Theatre to no longer hold the annual Jewish Film Festival (JFF). The rationale for terminating the 8-year partnership was due to the festival’s part-funding from the Israeli Embassy. The decision taken by the Tricycle had a significant impact on the UK Jewish community, as they were essentially told they must cut their ties with Israel. For many Jews, there is a unique connection with Israel, and being told that they are not allowed to have a relationship with the only Jewish state is very concerning. Moreover, The Tricycle took this decision in spite of the fact that the JFF prides itself on showing a wide range of films exploring a wide array of Jewish life, including many films which are critical of Israeli government policies.

After a substantial backlash which included the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport criticising the Tricycle’s decision, they withdrew their objections.

¹⁰⁴Dysch, M. *Never again: Sainsbury’s pledge over removing kosher food*, The Jewish Chronicle, 2014

¹⁰⁵The Jerusalem Post, *Manchester police restrict Gaza protesters outside Israeli cosmetics store*, 2014

¹⁰⁶Dysch, M. *‘Kedem staff member doused in ‘burning’ chemical in hate attack’*, The Jewish Chronicle, 2014

¹⁰⁷Innovative Minds Website, 2013

¹⁰⁸Lipman, J. *Anti-Israel protests fail to silence Habima Globe performance*, The Jewish Chronicle, 2012

Regardless of the positive outcome, the Jewish community for some weeks were greatly distressed by what had occurred.

7.3 University Campuses

On university campuses, there are numerous examples of troubling occurrences. Israeli diplomats have been surrounded on stage during talks and in a most severe case, Israeli Ambassador Daniel Taub was forced to abandon a lecture at Edinburgh University due to the extent of disruptions in 2012.

In May 2010, a protest turned physically aggressive at Leeds University, when BDS activists sought to gain access to a lecture in which an Israeli diplomat was speaking.¹⁰⁹

There was also a conviction for racial abuse of a student in Scotland for breaking into a Jewish student's room, rubbing his hands on his genitals, and then wiping them on an Israeli flag on the Jewish student's wall. This was accompanied by anti-Israel abuse. The victim, as well as the chaplains accompanying him to the trial, had to be escorted by police to their car as they were subjected to abuse and intimidation from anti-Israel and pro-boycott campaigners.¹¹⁰

The University and College Union invited Bongani Masuku to partake in a BDS strategy meeting in 2009, even though Masuku has made remarks against the South African Jewish community that the South African Human Rights Commission ruled as hate speech. He stated in regard to supporters of Israel "that those who do not support the rights of other people must face the consequences, even if it means that we will do something that may necessarily cause what is regarded as harm."¹¹¹

To highlight the unease Jews have felt by BDS campaigners at university, the Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism reported that boycott debates are likely to cause difficulties for Jewish academics and students, to exclude Jews from academic life and have a detrimental effect on Jewish studies.¹¹²

What this section hopes to demonstrate is that the BDS campaign, and their activists, frequently cross the line of legitimate protest into hate-filled, sometimes antisemitic action.

It is essential that those who are looking to support the BDS campaign are aware of the methods, tactics and unsavoury actions taken by its members. It is also important to note that none of the above assists the Palestinian people or the cause of peace. It merely brings conflict to the UK.

As will be extensively outlined in the 'Invest in Peace' section, those that truly desire a better future for the region should invest their resources, time and support into unifying projects, and reject outright the divisive BDS campaign.

¹⁰⁹Sheinman, A. *University students disrupt Israeli ambassador talk*, The Jewish Chronicle, 2012

¹¹⁰Dych, M, *Racially abused Jewish student felt 'unsafe' at St Andrews*, The Jewish Chronicle, 2011

¹¹¹News24, *Masuku guilty of hate speech*, 2009

¹¹²Hirsh, D. *Engage Online*, 2013

8

IMPACT ON THE UK

Implementation of the BDS strategy on Israel would have a substantial negative impact on the UK and that must be acknowledged. Bilateral trade between the UK and Israel over the past three years has exceeded £3billion.¹¹³

Israel is not only an important trading partner for the UK, but Israeli products and technology are an increasingly essential part of life.

Teva tablets (an Israeli company) is the largest supplier of medicines in the UK. One in six prescription packs in the UK is a Teva product.¹¹⁴ Moreover, with products varying from painkillers to essential life-saving cancer drugs, Teva is a vital company for the welfare of British patients. To boycott companies like Teva would have a devastating effect on many families across the UK.

A moving story in the international press was about Claire Lomas who, despite being paralysed from the waist down, was able to complete the London Marathon in 2012. She was able to achieve this remarkable feat thanks to the life changing 'ReWalk Suit', designed by Israeli company Argo Medical Technologies.¹¹⁵

Further examples include Intel Israel's revolutionary development of the 8088 (Pentium MMX) processor. In the medical sphere, Given Imaging is a world leader in developing vital technology to assist doctors in detecting disorders. One such innovation is PillCam (a capsule endoscopy) which has become the 'gold standard' for intestinal visualization enabling a non-intrusive diagnosis. The optical heartbeat monitor developed by Bar-Ilan University's Ze'ev Zalevsky is a groundbreaking medical technology utilising a laser light source and fast camera.¹¹⁶

Additionally, projects such as GridOn, 3G Solar, Ormat Technologies and Netafim are providing vital components to numerous industries ranging from agricultural development to engineering physics.¹¹⁷

It is important to note that in addition to harming the peace process, an adoption of the BDS strategy will have a substantial impact on British patients, consumers and businesses.

¹¹³UK Trade and Investment, *Exporting to Israel*, 2014

¹¹⁴Teva UK Website, 2014

¹¹⁵Press Association, *Paralysed Claire Lomas finishes London Marathon 16 days after it began*, 2012

¹¹⁶Leichman, A. *Israel 21C*, 2011

¹¹⁷*Ibid*

9

A SETTLEMENT BOYCOTT

The future of the settlements is of course an important issue that will need to be resolved as part of any peace agreement. However, the attempt to pinpoint settlements as the primary barrier to peace is disingenuous.¹¹⁸ It is but one of many issues that need to be addressed. Therefore to impose a settlement boycott creates a disproportionate focus on one aspect of the conflict. The implication that flows from this position, is that if settlements were halted or removed there would be peace. This again is fanciful and does not pay proper respect to the immense challenges that must be overcome to achieve a lasting peace.

Additionally, as discussed in previous sections, there are real security concerns that come with an Israeli withdrawal of territory that must not be overlooked. After the withdrawal from Gaza (as outlined in Section 3.2) Israelis have had to endure over 11,000 rocket attacks. As also discussed in Section 3.2 the topography of the West Bank means that there are areas beyond the green line of strategic importance to Israel's security. Thus, only as part of a comprehensive agreement that addresses Israel's security needs can a widespread withdrawal of Israeli presence realistically occur.

Indeed, international law recognises this under UN Resolution 242. Resolution 242 states that Israel must return 'territories' captured in the Six-Day War, but the drafters of the resolution (USA and Britain) deliberately omitted using the terms 'all territories' or 'the territories' while also stating that Israel must have 'secure and recognized boundaries.' This is because there was a realisation that a full Israeli withdrawal to indefensible boundaries could not occur. The point is that the Green Line is not a final boundary, and that the ultimate future of the settlements will be decided through negotiations.¹¹⁹

It is also important to be aware that in previous negotiations both Israelis and Palestinians have accepted innovative solutions regarding the settlements. In these agreements, the larger settlements will remain as part of Israel in exchange for land swaps to compensate the new State of Palestine.¹²⁰ Ultimately, the boycotting of settlements does nothing to address the many other issues that will need to be resolved.

¹¹⁸Caplan Op.cit p.253.

¹¹⁹Dershowitz, A. The U.N. Gangs Up on Israel—Again. Wall Street Journal, 2011.

¹²⁰Quandt Op.cit, p.368

An additional issue with the settlement boycott is that it is often merely a tactic to achieve a full boycott of Israel. It is seen as the first step along the way of total delegitimisation of Israel, as advocated by leading BDS campaigners such as Barghouti.¹²²

A further aspect of the settlement boycott is that Israeli companies in these areas are a major source of employment for Palestinians. For example Sodastream, an environmentally-friendly company specialising in turning tap water into fizzy drinks, had one plant based in the West Bank. Sodastream employed both Israelis and Palestinians at an equal wage, a substantially higher salary – roughly 4-5 times higher - than the average Palestinian wage, as well as providing health insurance. The closure of the plant will substantially and negatively impact the lives of many of its Palestinian workers.

There are currently 14 Israeli industrial parks in the West Bank, with over 750 factories;¹²⁴ 20,000 Palestinians work in the settlements, side-by-side with Israelis, under Israeli labour law and making more than double the salary of other Palestinians.¹²⁵ It is clear that these thousands of Palestinians would suffer if companies that operate in the settlements were forced to close and this is an important reality that needs to be remembered while discussing a boycott of settlements.

The socio-economic makeup of the settlers themselves is also important. They are comprised of a variety of people, with many choosing to live in settlements for economic reasons rather than religious or nationalist attachments¹²⁶ and their demonization through a boycott is problematic.

Ultimately, the issue of settlements and final borders will be resolved through negotiations. It is by assisting the chances of negotiations through promoting peace that the process of resolving the settlements can be hastened, rather than the problematic boycott.

¹²¹Barghouti, Op.cit, P.183

¹²²Sodastream, About the plant

¹²³Simons, J. Why even the Palestinian Authority opposes the boycott of Israel, The Telegraph, 2014

¹²⁴Abu Toameh, K. 20,000 Palestinians working in settlements, survey finds, 2013

¹²⁵Heller, A. Settlers defy stereotypes amid peace talks, The Times of Israel, 2013

10

ACADEMIC BOYCOTT

The very notion of discriminating against academics based on their nationality, regardless of their personal beliefs, runs contrary to the ideals and principles of academia; namely freedom of thought and the sharing of ideas.

Indeed, when one looks at Israel's university sector, it is inconceivable why it would be the target of a boycott. Israeli academics have been, and remain, some of the most prominent and loudest voices calling for change and campaigning for peace. This is a reality recognised by the President of Palestinian Al-Quds University, Sari Nusseibeh, who stated "If we are to look at Israeli society, it is within the academic community that we've had the most progressive pro-peace views and views that have come out in favour of seeing us as equals... If you want to punish any sector, this is the last one to approach."¹²⁷

In fact, Al-Quds University is engaged in a number of joint programmes with its Israeli counterparts. An example is the joint Al-Quds and Technion-Israel Institute of Technology research program into advanced techniques of removing pharmaceuticals from treated wastewater. Such projects enhance cooperation and dialogue; they break down barriers to achieve advancements that will undoubtedly benefit their respective societies. These types of projects should be applauded and encouraged. If the boycotters achieved their objectives, they would have to be dismantled.

Israel's universities are characterised by diversity. This is in fact best demonstrated by Omar Barghouti (the BDS activist frequently cited in this document) who, regardless of his political convictions, has - for many years - himself been a Doctoral student at Israel's Tel Aviv University. This exemplifies how people of all faiths and ethnic backgrounds, regardless of their political allegiances, are accepted into Israel's universities. This further highlights a commitment to academic freedom that all those who value the power of ideas and free-thinking should cherish.¹²⁹

The 2013 Nobel Prize for Chemistry was awarded to Arieh Warshel and Michael Levitt, whose computer models according to the judges have "become crucial for most advances made in chemistry today."¹³⁰ It would be an indictment if, on the whims of the BDS fringe group, such great minds were ostracised due to the accident of their nationality.

¹²⁷The Associated Press, *Palestinian university president comes out against boycott of Israeli academics*, Haaretz, 2006

¹²⁸Peres Center for Peace online, 2013

¹²⁹Hirsh, D. Omar Barghouti do as I say not as I do, Engageonline, 2009

¹³⁰Press, S. *Israeli Scientists win Nobel Prize in Chemistry*, Israel21c, 2013

Yet again this is based on an unfair double-standard, designed to attack all parts of Israeli society. Realising the repugnance to most people of boycotting individuals based on their nationalities, some in the BDS campaign are trying to advance institution-based rationales for their boycotts. An example is University and College Union claiming that their boycott only focuses on the institutions and not on the individual, so for example terminating 'joint research projects.'¹³¹ However, this does not only affect the institution in question, it directly harms the individual scholars and their prospects of progression within their specific field.

Furthermore, within the academic boycott campaign there are resonances of antisemitism. A disturbing argument that has been used is that due to education being so highly regarded and playing such a prominent role in Jewish culture, an academic boycott of Israel will be acutely painful to Jews and therefore most likely to force Israel into concessions.¹³²

Many international institutions have criticised the notion of the academic boycott, Harvard University, Drew Faust aptly stated "Academic boycotts subvert the academic freedoms and values necessary to the free flow of ideas, which is the lifeblood of the worldwide community of scholars."¹³³

Ultimately, an academic boycott strikes against the values our society holds dear and should be opposed. The right to freedom of thought and expression is a crucial facet of democracy and to discriminate against this based on nationality offends our sense of moral values.

¹³¹ Julius, Op.cit p.469

¹³² Ibid

¹³³ Faust, D. University Officials and Academic Institutions Respond to ASA Boycott, ADL, 2014

11

CULTURAL BOYCOTT

Much like the academic boycott, a cultural boycott is not so much a mere display of displeasure with certain policies of a government - it is an act of censorship. This is tantamount to a refusal to engage in ideas, to isolate those wanting to experience artistic expressions, driven by a desire to divide as opposed to unite. This is an attack on our liberal and democratic values. The UK is renowned for embracing and experiencing the joys of different cultures, with cities from across the country frequently holding diverse cultural performances to provide the opportunity for local residents to participate in a celebration of the arts. Such an experience should not be denied due to a performer's nationality.

A recent example of BDS enforced censorship occurred at the Edinburgh fringe in July 2014. The Incubator, an Israeli theatre group, had its entire fringe event cancelled after only one preview following intense BDS protests. Underbelly Director Charlie Wood said that this was "the worst situation" he had ever had to deal with. Fortunately, the theatre was able to perform in Leeds and London.¹³⁴

Another example of an Israeli cultural contribution was the 2012 UK visit of the Batsheva Dance Ensemble. This is an ethnically mixed group, with performers coming from a variety of backgrounds. Indeed, six out of the fifteen dancers are not Israeli. Such a makeup epitomises a celebration of diversity in itself. Additionally, Batsheva are known to engage in widespread educational and outreach activities, holding open rehearsals for underprivileged people throughout Israel – regardless of race or religion.¹³⁵ Unfortunately, it was the subject of a relentless BDS campaign that sought to disrupt a number of their performances in an act of censorship.¹³⁶ The harassment and cultural vandalism by the campaigners when they failed to succeed in preventing Batsheva performing, exposes their extremism. Furthermore, the campaign failed as the venues, together with the British public, stood up to the bullying.

¹³⁴Snow,G., Dibdim,T. *Israeli show protest 'worst thing ever to happen at the fringe'*, The Stage News,2014

¹³⁵Batsheva Dance Company Website

¹³⁶Elgot, J. *Israeli dancers face Edinburgh festival disruption*, The Jewish Chronicle, 2012

Moreover, Israeli artists are known to play a positive role in bringing people together to overcome the conflict. Ilan Ronen, Director of the Israeli Habima National Theatre, has stated, "The artist's role is to build a bridge of culture, which can enable politicians to sit down to negotiations."¹³⁷ It would be antithetical to tolerance and the pursuit of peace to stigmatise such a group on the grounds of its nationality.

The impact of such a decision would negatively impact on our cultural well-being. Author Howard Jacobson summarises, "Whoever would go to art with a mind already made up, on any subject, misses what art is for. So to censor it in the name of a political or religious conviction, no matter how sincerely held, is to tear out its very heart."¹³⁸

The justification for a cultural boycott will inevitably be some link with the State of Israel, most likely related to funding. Ultimately, the targeting of artists only serves the purpose of demonising Israelis. This relates back to one of the founding motivations of the BDS campaign to delegitimise Israel and Israelis. The negative and divisive effect of such an approach has been mentioned throughout this paper.

¹³⁷Pfeffer, A. *Hath not an Israeli theatre company eyes? Does it not bleed*, Haaretz, 2012

¹³⁸Brown, M. *Booker winner attacks bid to ban Israeli national theatre company from Globe*, The Guardian, 2012

12

A BETTER WAY: INVEST IN PEACE



Jewish and Arab boys relaxing after playing football. The Peres Centre for Peace

"Either we are going to die together, or we are going to learn to live together. And if we are going to live together, we have to talk" - Eleanor Roosevelt

As this paper has sought to demonstrate, the BDS tactic is negative, divisive and counter-productive. But refusing to be complicit in BDS does not mean that people, movements or churches need to be passive on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The next section will consider alternatives to boycotts that might allow communities in the UK to work together on a proactive and positive response to the conflict, working together to invest in peace.

Ultimately, this approach will hopefully enable communities to export good relations, rather than import conflict. Civil Society can form a coalition to fund and support vital projects that lead to the building of dialogue, empathy and trust between Israelis and Palestinians within their respective societies, providing an alternative to hatred.¹⁴⁷

To play a positive role in the region is to help create an atmosphere that is conducive to peace negotiations, an atmosphere in which barriers are broken down and taboos are overcome. Such a contribution can best be made by fostering communication and understanding, with many initiatives seeking to form a network to profoundly change reality and build a better future, working together in different sectors such as business as well as political activism.

¹⁴⁷Nimer, M. And Lazarus, N. "The Peacebuilder's Paradox and the dynamics of dialogue" in Beyond bullets and bombs, Praeger 2007, p.19-22

12.1 Supporting Peace by Bringing People Together

12.1.1 The Bereaved Families Forum (The Parents Circle)

This remarkable initiative is one such example of Palestinians and Israelis coming together to build a better future. The Parents Circle is made up of roughly six-hundred Israeli and Palestinian families who have tragically lost a family member as a direct result of the conflict. They seek to channel the greatest grief a person can experience into propelling their societies towards reconciliation through the humanisation of the other, actively opposing violence and revenge.

They come together and acknowledge the other side's suffering, breaking down preconceived notions, and sharing their message with wider society.

An example of their work are 'Dialogue Meetings', in which Israelis and Palestinians tell their heart-breaking stories, concluding by reiterating their commitment to peace. The Dialogue Meetings reach more than 25,000 Israeli and Palestinian students annually.¹⁴⁸ Proof of their impact can be found in the feedback forms students fill in, one student wrote:

*"This was a fascinating encounter. I never had a dialogue or met a Palestinian in the past. It was an eye-opening experience which gave me a different perspective. I discovered things which I never believed happen on the other side and also their willingness to reconcile. This gave me so much hope and caused me to look at things differently."*¹⁴⁹

Transmitting such messages to students is vital for achieving, and indeed later upholding, a peace agreement. As has been seen in Northern Ireland, while it is painstakingly difficult to reach a negotiated agreement, it is equally hard to ensure it is upheld. Breaking down barriers and stereotypes is essential for increasing the chances of any agreement being kept. This is why a number of negotiators realise that, in conjunction with high-level talks, a lasting peace has a far greater chance of success should a deeper understanding be reached at the grassroots level.¹⁵⁰

The power of grassroots activism in promoting peace is also well understood by a number of commentators. If domestic populations are demanding peace from their governments, this encourages the leaderships into making the decisions necessary for peace that would not otherwise be politically possible. Campaigning and reconciliation networks that bring the sides together assist in building the momentum towards an agreement at the political level. Timing has often played a significant role in the chances of success in international mediation and in the Arab/Palestinian-Israeli negotiations in particular. By creating a situation in which two populations are favourable to compromise, negotiators and political leaders are greatly empowered to achieve a peace deal.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸The Parents Circle website, Dialogue Meetings, 2013

¹⁴⁹Ibid

¹⁵⁰Doubilet, K. *Alice in the Holy Land in "Beyond bullets and bombs"*, Praeger 2007, p.191-196

¹⁵¹Siniver, A. "Power, Impartiality and Timing: Three Hypotheses on Third Party Mediation in the Middle East", *Political Studies* 2006, Volume 54 pp.806-826

12.1.2 The One Voice Movement

This is another example of a campaign whose aim is to amplify the voices of the mainstream Israelis and Palestinians who desire peace and to empower them to stimulate change. They do this by having Israelis campaign for concessions to their government, and Palestinians doing the same with theirs. They run town hall meetings, have chapters in universities and provide leadership training for their activists. Indeed, the One Voice Movement has even provided crucial support to the Caucus for Ending the Israeli-Arab Conflict in the Israeli Knesset (Parliament).¹⁵²

12.1.3 Interfaith Encounter Association

In addition to these impressive civil society organisations, there is also a role for interfaith dialogue to contribute towards reconciliation. It is clear that when there are positive interactions between people of faith, this too can transcend the hatred and fear mentioned above. The Interfaith Encounter Association (IEA) is one such project. It is built on the belief that religion offers a way out of conflict as opposed to instigating it, that unifying conversations focusing around personal belief and relationship with G-d can overcome the prejudices that participants might initially hold.¹⁵³ The IEA runs a wide range of community projects from female study groups to selling handicrafts.

12.1.4 Children of Peace

This is a non-partisan intermediary organisation set up in the United Kingdom that seeks to encourage projects between Israeli and Palestinian children in sport, education and the arts. It is a grant awarding agency that supports funds that meet with the organisation's principles of: "the protection of all children, conflict resolution, peaceful co-existence, co-operation between communities and respect for the faith, heritage, history and values of each community in the Middle East."¹⁵⁴

12.1.5 Tiyul-Rihla

Tiyul-Rihla is a grassroots educational project that runs mixed tour groups of Israelis and Palestinians to learn about each other's histories. There are four trips annually which focus on sites of historical and cultural importance, encouraging the participants to learn about each other from each other, while learning to find a common language. The trip aims to dispel misconceptions and build a social network of Israelis and Palestinians.

12.2 Business Endeavours Bringing People Together

12.2.1 The Israeli-Palestinian Chamber of Commerce (IPCC)

The Israeli-Palestinian Chamber of Commerce (IPCC) was formed by leading Israeli entrepreneurs and economic organisations in 2008 who seek to enhance bilateral trade and investments between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. This initiative promotes business and investment, creating strong business and social networks between Israelis and Palestinians. This business interaction is not just financially

¹⁵²One Voice movement blog, 2013

¹⁵³Stolov, Y. *Believe it can happen*, "Beyond bullets and bombs", Praeger 2007, p.133-135

¹⁵⁴Children of Peace Website, 2014

beneficial, it also generates mutual trust - advancing cooperation in both the public and private spheres.

The Chamber facilitates government and private sector interaction regarding economic, legal and commercial aspects, looking to remove barriers to trade and informing its members of new business opportunities.

The initiative notes the importance and benefits of people to people contact combined with economic inter-dependence, which can lead to a better and peaceful future.

12.2.2 Breaking the Impasse

Breaking the Impasse, (BTI) is an initiative comprised of Israeli and Palestinian business and social leaders who actively campaign for the two-state solution. The group was founded by Munib Masri (a Palestinian energy sector leader) and Yossi Vardi (an Israeli hi-tech leader) with other high-profile names joining including *Amdocs* founder Maurice Kahan, Bezeq CEO Avi Gabai, industrialist Gad Propper, Israeli low-cost supermarket owner Rami Levy and former Ambassador to the US Prof. Itamar Rabinovich.¹⁵⁵

BTI operates under the backing of the World Economic Forum (WEF), with John Kerry praising BTI during his WEF address, noting:

*"They represent a courageous and visionary group of people, civic and business leaders, Israelis and Palestinians, who have I think the uncommon ability to look at an ageless stalemate and actually be able to see opportunities for progress. And even as they found plenty to disagree on – and I understand they did in the course of their discussions – even as they fully understand the difficult history that is embedded in this conflict – they refuse to underestimate the potential for the future."*¹⁵⁶

Prior to a WEF meeting, leaders of 'Breaking the Impasse' led delegations of business experts from across the world to analyse the investment opportunities in the Palestinian economy. This included developing tourism, construction, light manufacturing, building materials, energy, agriculture, and information and communications technology (ICT). Their aim was to raise \$4billion through business investment.¹⁵⁷

12.2.3 The Portland Trust

The Portland Trust is a UK non-profit 'action tank' that seeks to promote peace between Israelis and Palestinians through economic cooperation, working with a range of partners in the Israeli and Palestinian private sector. The Trust's approach is supported by evidence from other conflict situations – Northern Ireland, Bosnia Herzegovina and more broadly through research carried out jointly with the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London.¹⁵⁸ The Trust looks to support a number of initiatives including the Israeli-Palestinian Chamber of Commerce

¹⁵⁵Ben-Israel, A. Globes, *100 Israeli business chiefs to promote peace at Davos*, 2014

¹⁵⁶Secretary Kerry, J. Remarks to Special Program on Breaking the Impasse World Economic Forum, US Department of State, 2013.

¹⁵⁷Teller, N. Israel-Palestine: Breaking the Impasse, *A Mid-East Journal* 2013.

¹⁵⁸The Portland Trust Website 2014

(discussed above) as well as investment opportunities in both the Israeli and Palestinian economies. This has included an 'affordable housing programme' which designed a \$1bn programme to build 15,000 affordable housing units in new communities across the West Bank. In 2014 The Portland Trust assisted Birzeit University (BZU) in the development of a student housing proposal to generate immediate income to cover the university's financial shortages.

12.3. Social Responsibility and Peace Making

12.3.1 Peres Center for Peace

A further example of a reconciliation organisation is the Peres Center for Peace. This is a non-governmental, non-political organisation that brings Israelis and Palestinians together in many spheres, involving thousands of people annually. Their project's purpose is to empower individuals to be actively engaged in peace building, and as such they do not seek to ignore the conflict, but rather deal with issues head on to secure a better future.

Examples include the highly successful 'Saving Children' programme that takes Palestinian children into Israeli hospitals for complex procedures and diagnoses where such services are unavailable in the Palestinian Authority. They also have a project called 'Training Doctors' that aims to enhance the Palestinian healthcare system by providing advanced training opportunities for Palestinian doctors in Israeli hospitals.¹⁵⁹

The Peres Center is not only active in the medical sphere, but also has a range of projects in the arts, sports, education and economic cooperation.

Further examples of the significant achievements of the Peres Center include the 'Profitable Crop Production' and 'Twinned Peace Sports School Programme.' The former promotes profitable crop production in the West Bank by providing technical consultations, seeds and training to a Palestinian agricultural cooperative¹⁶⁰ and the second takes Israeli and Palestinian boys and girls, from 'twinned' Israeli and Palestinian communities, providing a variety of sports coaching, including football and wheelchair basketball – combining the activities breaking down barriers and stereotypes.¹⁶¹

There are many more projects that positively affect local communities while also forming the space for understanding to occur.

12.3.2 Middle East Education through Technology (MEET)

MEET is an exceptional educational initiative that develops and enhances professional skills amongst Israelis and Palestinians. Through a partnership with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), MEET provides its participants

¹⁵⁹Peres Center for Peace Website, Medicine and Healthcare, 2013

¹⁶⁰Peres Center for Peace Website, Business and Environment 2014

¹⁶¹Perse Center for Peace Website, Peace Education

with advanced technological and leadership competencies while simultaneously instilling the ability for these young leaders to create social change within their own communities.¹⁶² MEET tackles misconceptions between Israelis and Palestinians, and through cooperation and joint educational classes, the programme ensures mutual respect within the class and from the participants.

The MEET programme promotes development and interaction, and is a project that will contribute towards economic growth and cooperation in the future as well as reconciliation.¹⁶³ Initiatives that have emerged from the programme (started up by participants) include Aidme a GPS based app that connects emergency workers with those in need of aid. Book4All is another project that tracks the books you have read and shares them with friends. Users are able to share reviews, recommend and sell books through the site.¹⁶⁴

12.3.3 EcoPeace/Middle East Friends of the Earth (MEFoE)

EcoPeace/MEFoE brings Palestinian, Israeli and Jordanian environmentalists to cooperate on environmental issues and to support sustainable development.¹⁶⁵ Examples of successes include Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian mayors agreeing to rehabilitate the Jordan River.

The environment is a necessary area for mutual dependency, and this inter-dependence is highly significant. Since 1994, Jordan stores its water in Israel's Sea of Galilee in the winter, with Israel giving the water back to Jordan in the summer. ECOPeace Israel's Director, Gidon Bromberg, pointed to this project noting "prior enemies can create positive interdependencies once they start trusting each other."¹⁶⁶

Thomas Friedman, in an article covering EcoPeace projects states:

"The only source of lasting security is not walls, rockets, U.N. votes or European demonstrations. It is relationships of trust between neighbours that create healthy interdependencies — ecological and political. They are the hardest things to build, but also the hardest things to break once in place."¹⁶⁷

¹⁶²MEET Website, 2014

¹⁶³Ibid

¹⁶⁴MEET Website, 2014

¹⁶⁵EcoPeace Website 2014

¹⁶⁶Friedman, T. The Last Train, NYTimes, 2014

¹⁶⁷Ibid

13

CONCLUSION

This report proposes that for those who want to create peace between Israelis and Palestinians there is a far better way than advocating boycotts: Investing in peace instead.

The BDS campaign does not lead to the populations or their leaders engaging in meaningful dialogue and building true relationships. On the contrary, it fuels the fire of demonization, confirming stereotypes and myths about the 'other'. This is totally contrary to the goals of peace.

Those standing against peace projects between Israelis and Palestinians frequently use the term 'normalisation' to campaign against it. This plays into the taboo of *tatbi'a* (translated as 'normalisation' from Arabic), which is designed to provoke the image of the enemy in Palestinian and Arab discourse and therefore not to engage with it. It is based on the precept that engagement and dialogue with Israelis is akin to acknowledging their legitimacy and thus surrendering to them.¹⁶⁸ Opposition to 'normalisation' has fed into the mindset of a number of BDS activists and relates back to the reality that for many their true motivations are not to achieve a lasting peace, but rather to see the end of the State of Israel through this process of delegitimisation.

As Dr. Kuriansky, an expert in conflict resolution, astutely remarks "The contact hypothesis in social psychology proposes that working together is an effective way to break down barriers between in-groups and out-groups... The organisations reaching out to each other across the chasms of misunderstanding and hate to achieve understanding and acceptance."¹⁶⁹

Ultimately, promoting contact and understanding between the two populations is a vital way to work towards a better future.

As this document has shown, the BDS campaign unfairly singles Israel out for disproportionate blame, ignoring important Israeli concessions, concerns and claims. The BDS campaign perpetuates intransigence on both sides, making compromises far less likely. It is a divisive approach that does not assist with the goal of reaching a lasting peace.

¹⁶⁸Ibid 67 p.22

¹⁶⁹Kuriansky, J. Introduction: *A professional and personal odyssey for peace, in "beyond bullets and bombs"*, Praeger 2007, p.xxvi

The apartheid slur against Israel further highlights that a central motivation of the campaign is to attack the very legitimacy of the state.

The tactics and actions of the BDS campaign divide local communities, creating significant unrest and unease amongst the Jewish community and other members of the public. Those who truly want a solution need to look towards something unifying and positive.

We must ensure that we do not import conflict, but rather that we export peace. Our aim should be to generate an atmosphere that is conducive to concessions and that will enable populations to propel their leaders into meaningful dialogue and negotiations. Sometimes, in moments of challenge in the conflict, it is helpful to look at other, seemingly intractable situations and see what can be learned.

Based on his experiences in Northern Ireland, Reverend Gary Mason has made this powerful comment:

"I have worked for peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland for over 25 years. I remember as a young boy in the 1970's learning sectarian songs in the highly charged atmosphere of the conflict. One song was encouraging those in the Protestant community to boycott Catholic goods and never to spend their money in the Republic of Ireland. As a more mature Methodist minister now, having reflected on the value of boycotts, they simply taught me to hate and actually for many men of my generation drove them towards violence. Hard, meaningful dialogue is always best and that should be the Church's role. For me boycotts are sterile, distant measures. Try rolling your sleeves up and live your faith out on the ground and encourage the tough choice of raw human engagement."¹⁷⁰

There is a better way than boycotts. We need to invest in peace instead.

¹⁷⁰Reverend Gary Mason, Direct quote for the Methodist Consultation Document, 2013





The Board of Deputies of British Jews is the voice of British Jewry – the only organisation based on cross-communal, democratic, grassroots representation. It is the first port of call for Government, media and others seeking to understand the Jewish community's interests and concerns.

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