



Boycott Divestment Sanctions

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

Member organizations:

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

Your Excellency Lady Ashton,

29 April 2010

The Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions National Committee (BNC) writes to you with a sense of urgency. As you know, the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is in the final stages of accepting Israel as a member. We heard from the Irish Foreign Minister Micheál Martin that the EU will adopt a common policy in regards to Israel's accession. We urge you to take a principled stance and encourage European countries to postpone the vote on Israel's accession until it can be ascertained beyond doubt that it fully respects human rights principles and commits itself to peace, democracy and conformity with UN principles, conditions which were explicitly set when Israel was formally invited to join OECD back in May 2007.

Even though Israel didn't comply with the requirements above, its accession to the OECD proceeded almost unhindered to the final stages. If the OECD does indeed accept Israel's membership it will be conveying a starkly clear message to Palestinians, Arabs and indeed international civil society at large that Israel's ongoing occupation and colonization of Palestinian and other Arab territory and all the human rights violations associated with it are dismissed as irrelevant to the OECD. Furthermore, the Goldstone report on Israel's aggression against the occupied Gaza Strip which was adopted by the UN General Assembly and, most recently, by the European Parliament, and which unambiguously accuses Israel of committing war crimes and possible crimes against humanity will be deemed irrelevant to the OECD member states in assessing whether Israel complies with minimal requirements of respect for human rights and international law.

Rewarding Israel with OECD membership will therefore irreparably undermine the rule of law and further entrench the culture of impunity that has enabled Israel to escalate its occupation and racial discrimination against the Palestinian people.

We were encouraged by your recent visit to Gaza and your call for an end to Israel's illegal and inhumane siege. At the same time, we are disappointed that the European Union has not gone beyond words to force Israel to abide by its obligations under international law. The apparent readiness of EU member states to accept Israel sheds doubt on the seriousness of the European Union to hold Israel accountable for its persistent violations of internationally sanctioned Palestinian rights.

You said recently that "East Jerusalem is occupied territory together with the West Bank. The EU is opposed to the destruction of homes, the eviction of Arab residents and the construction of the separation barrier¹."

¹ <http://euobserver.com/9/29167>

We were thus shocked to learn that European countries have approved economic data from Israel submitted to OECD, which include illegal colonies in the occupied West Bank. As Israeli economist Shir Hever said, "the OECD is treating Israel as though it has seven million citizens when, in reality, it has 11 million subjects, of whom four million are Palestinians living under occupation." By voting to accept Israel's membership in OECD, European states will further entrench their complicity in affording Israel an exceptional status and ongoing impunity before international law.

Only a few months into your new job as Europe's first High Representative for Foreign Affairs you have the unprecedented opportunity to steer European policy to one that is fair and based on respect for human rights and international law. Rewarding -- and therefore encouraging -- lawless behavior by Israel does not serve long-term European interests any more than it does Palestinian and Arab interests.

Palestinian civil society, as widely represented in the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions National Committee (BNC) urges you to intervene with urgency to put off the decision to accept Israel as a member of OECD until it has fulfilled all its obligations. Only then will the EU be seen to translate its words into meaningful actions.

In deep concern and with sincere greetings,

Muhammad Jaradat

camp@badil.org

BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights

Telefax: +972-2-2747346

On behalf of the Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions National Committee (BNC)

Occupied Palestine, April 29th 2010