What is IBM?

IBM (International Business Machines) is a multinational corporation headquartered in Armonk, New York which provides IT and business consulting services and solutions to clients in over 170 countries. As one of the world’s largest technology companies, IBM provides software solutions to a wide variety of industries - aerospace and defence, petroleum, banking, healthcare and telecommunications, to name a few – in addition to providing home office technology such as laptop and desktop computers. IBM is also well-known for its emphasis on R&D, with eight research facilities across the world.

What ties does IBM have to Israel?

IBM has a long and well-documented history of operations in Israel. The corporation has played a very significant role in developing Israeli technical expertise and enhancing Israel’s international business profile. Since IBM began operations in Israel in 1950, IBM Israel has expanded to include the IBM Research & Development Labs as well as a Global Technology Unit. The R&D Labs, established as the IBM Scientific Center in 1972, comprise three separate research facilities: the Haifa Research Lab (which is IBM’s largest research facility outside the U.S.A), the IBM Israel Systems and Technology Group Lab and the IBM Israel Software Lab. In addition to providing high-tech solutions for Israeli business enterprises and technology start-ups, IBM also partners with various educational institutions in Israel such as Haifa University and the Technion – Israel Institute of Technology. Many employees at the R&D Labs also teach at various higher education institutions in Israel. The company constitutes a crucial link between academia and industry, both providing the resources for scientific and technological advancement to universities as well as recruiting graduates from Israeli institutions.

The corporation has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to furthering the development of the Israeli economy and strengthening its position in the world market. The IBM Global Technology Unit, established in 2001, has been described as the “crossroads between IBM and the Israeli high-tech industry,” providing Israeli companies international business opportunities with IBM while facilitating local IBM ventures. Until very recently, IBM also supplied virtualization software to the Israel Defence Forces, in addition to providing technology infrastructure (e.g. IBM mainframes and software) to the Israeli army for over 40 years. Several senior executives of IBM have also been recognized for their contributions to the strengthening of ties between Israel and its ally, the United States. For example, IBM Israel is a member of the Israel-America Chamber of Commerce and Industry, a voluntary organization of individuals and corporations which works to promote bilateral business relations between Israel and the United States. Meir Nissensohn, the CEO of IBM Israel, was honoured by the Chamber in 2008.

Why boycott IBM?

Through its continued willingness to invest in Israeli enterprises, whether economic or academic, IBM condones Israel’s ongoing military occupation of Palestinian territory and Israel’s concomitant violations of international humanitarian law. Moreover, its continued investment in Israel provides economic and technological support to an Apartheid state, which pursues institutionalized policies of racial discrimination (e.g. discriminatory policing of Palestinian citizens of Israel, discriminatory family reunification laws, confiscation of land owned by Palestinians.) The corporation, through its engagements with the Israel Defence Forces, is also in violation of the UN Norms on the Responsibilities of Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises. These norms highlight the responsibility of businesses – as organs of society – to promote the rights outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as the norms established in other UN treaties, such as the Geneva Conventions, the ICCPR and the ICESCR. Article 11 (Section E) of the UN Norms, in particular, explicitly states that “[t]ransnational corporations and other business enterprises shall refrain from any activity which supports, solicits or encourages States to abuse human rights.” As the state of Israel has violated many of the aforementioned UN treaties, IBM’s continued support for Israel and its army is in direct contravention of this article.
Furthermore, in July 2005, over 170 Palestinian civil society organizations issued a call asking for the international community to boycott those Israeli institutions which directly or indirectly support Israel’s military occupation of the Palestinian territories in an effort to help recognize the Palestinians’ right to self-determination. The boycott is designed to put economic pressure on Israel to withdraw from the Palestinian territories and discontinue all policies of racial discrimination, much like the international boycott strategy adopted with regard to the former apartheid regime in South Africa. IBM’s support for Israel’s economy, academic institutions and defence forces continues to help consolidate the country’s standing in the international arena even as it entrenches its military occupation of Palestinian territory and commits myriad violations of international law. For these reasons, social-justice minded Canadians will want to boycott IBM products and services until such time as Israel ceases to enforce its military occupation of the Palestinian territories.

**What IBM products and services can I boycott?**

Although the majority of IBM’s software solutions are geared towards the corporate sector, the company also sells the following consumer products, which can be purchased online and/or at retail stores:

- Replacement toner cartridges for HP LaserJet Printers (sold under IBM InfoPrint branding)
- Computer paper, copier tabs, multi-purpose paper, engineering/CAD rolls
- Used desktops and laptops.

For a list of well-known retailers that sell IBM products in Canada, please visit [www.cjpme.org/consumerboycott.htm](http://www.cjpme.org/consumerboycott.htm).

Individuals in a position to influence corporate purchasing decisions regarding IBM solutions and services are urged to boycott IBM software, workstations, servers and consulting services.

**In what other ways can I pressure IBM to join the boycott of Israel?**

CJPME’s boycott campaign is calling upon all individuals willing to put pressure on the Israeli government to withdraw from the occupied Palestinian territories. All concerned citizens should visit the CJPME Website for additional tools to pressure IBM to join the boycott

- CJPME encourages individuals to go to its IBM boycott action alert at [www.cjpme.ca/action_ibm_2010_09.shtml](http://www.cjpme.ca/action_ibm_2010_09.shtml) to send their complaints and questions to the executive board of IBM Canada.
- A selection of letter templates is available on the CJPME Boycott site at [www.cjpme.org/consumerboycott.htm](http://www.cjpme.org/consumerboycott.htm).
- Also, a mechanism to bring together the shareholders of IBM has been set up at [www.cjpme.org/bds.htm](http://www.cjpme.org/bds.htm) to prepare for possible shareholders-based initiatives to pressure IBM.

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5. Ibid.
11. For more information on Israeli Apartheid, please see CJPME’s factsheet on the same: [Apartheid in Israel](http://www.cjpme.org/bds.htm)
12. Please see [UN Norms on the Responsibilities of Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises](http://www.cjpme.org/bds.htm)