

**Position Paper: Canada and the BDS movement**

BDS Movement – The international “Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions” (BDS) movement, established in 2005 to apply economic pressure on Israel to respect international law vis-à-vis the Palestinians and its occupation of Palestinian territories.

A) Canadian Policymakers must debate “facts” when discussing BDS:

1. The BDS Movement’s formal objectives must form part of any discussion on BDS. Policy discussions on BDS which ignore the stated objectives of the BDS movement are not credible or serious. Policymakers must insist that discussions on BDS be based in the facts of the movement, and not on hearsay or innuendo.
2. As such, the BDS Movement’s three objectives are as follows:
 - “Ending [Israel’s] occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantling the Wall,
 - Recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and
 - Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN resolution 194.”

B) Policymakers must make clear that Canadians’ right to boycott will not be threatened:

1. Policymakers must refuse to criticize or condemn boycott movements. Boycott movements are inherently democratic: the decision to leverage one’s buying power to express displeasure is a personal, independent choice.
2. Policymakers must affirm BDS as a form of “freedom of expression.” Every boycott movement is a form of free expression. The right to hold a view, and to express it freely and publicly is a Charter right in Canada. Even if a policymaker doesn’t engage in a boycott himself, he must defend the right of others to engage in such a boycott.
3. Parliamentary motions should not be used to intimidate Canadians. In a response to the media on March 31, 2016, Stéphane Dion’s office admitted that it was not planning on “condemning” Canadians who support BDS, despite the clear directives of the anti-BDS motion of Feb. 22. If the government passes a motion, yet fails to live up to its directives, it becomes clear that the motion is clearly an attempt to intimidate Canadians from exercising their Charter rights.
4. Policymakers must challenge attempts to label a boycott as anti-Semitic. The BDS movement has specific demands, all of which adhere to international law, and all of which relate to specific violations of international law by the state of Israel. Accusations of anti-Semitism against Canadians are serious, and policymakers making such accusations should be held to account.

C) If Canadian policymakers are opposed to BDS, they should be actively promoting alternative approaches to peace, justice and security for Palestinians and Israelis:

Decades of peace talks, UN resolutions supporting Palestinian human rights, and ICJ decisions supporting Palestinian human rights have brought no tangible advances or protections to Palestinians. The current Israeli Prime Minister withdrew from negotiations in 2014, and was reelected in 2015 with a promise never to permit the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank. If certain Canadian policymakers oppose BDS, what will they propose instead?

1. If BDS is unpalatable for certain parties, they should make their vision clear for alternative solutions in Israel-Palestine, as the EU has done. Expecting the Palestinians to accept the *status quo* indefinitely is not reasonable. The EU has made clear that if Israel does not soon present a diplomatic initiative that leads to a meaningful breakthrough toward a solution to the conflict, it has a list of sanctions that will be levied against Israel in the fields of trade, agriculture, science and culture. Will Canadian parties consider comparable demands?
2. While awaiting a solution, Canadian policymakers should express a clear commitment to the safety and well-being of all, and to the timely creation of a viable and sovereign Palestinian state. Options to consider could include:
 - a. Support deployment of UN peacekeeping forces on the Israeli-Gaza border.
 - b. Support Palestinian accession to the ICJ. Despite Canada's surprising opposition, Palestine is now a member of the ICC. Canada should welcome all states' accession to the ICJ, and stop describing such accession by Palestinians as a "unilateral" measure meriting punishment.
 - c. Firmly oppose Israeli demands for further territorial concessions by Palestinian negotiators. Point out in international forums that the pre-67 borders are very generous to Israel.
 - d. Support recognition of Palestine at the UN. Oppose and denounce Israeli machinations to prevent it.
 - e. Promptly denounce Israeli "settlement" plans, and call for the removal or relocation of Israel's Wall. Press for the removal of Israeli colonies "settlements," and call for Israel to respect the ICJ's scathing 2004 legal ruling against Israel's Wall.
 - f. Pass and enforce legislation prohibiting entry of Israeli "settlement" goods into Canada
 - g. Criminalize and penalize Canadian individuals, corporations and NGOs for involvement in Israeli "settlement" activities and Israel's military occupation. In view of the illegality of the settlements under international law, Canada should do its utmost to prevent settlement products from entering the Canadian market. Given repeated UN resolutions calling on Israel to halt the occupation, now in its 47th year, Canada should not allow Canadians to participate or benefit in occupation activities.
3. Policymakers must ask how Canada's interests are served by protecting Israel's image. Ultimately, the Canadian government must act in the political, diplomatic, economic and security interests of Canadians. Dozens of countries are currently sanctioned internationally for various reasons. How are Canada's interests advanced by singling out Israel for image protection? Would the government consider organizing a multi-lateral forum on how effectively Canada's current policies re Israel serve Canadian interests?

For more Information...

For more information, please consult CJPME Website (www.cjpme.org) or call CJPME at 438-380-5410.