

Confronting European funding for BDS

✧ The Times of Israel – January 29, 2014

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Although the cabinet is only now giving this high priority, the boycott campaign targeting Israeli firms and companies that do business with Israel has been active for more than ten years. The BDS movement (boycott, divestment and sanctions) is led by the Palestinian leadership, in close alliance with a network of political advocacy non-governmental organizations (NGOs) funded largely by European governments. In order to successfully blunt and defeat this threat, it is necessary to understand the sources of BDS campaigns, their scope, alliances, primary tactics, and vulnerabilities.

[BDS is a form of political warfare against the State of Israel](#) based on the exploitation of human rights and humanitarian principles, double standards, invidious comparisons with South African apartheid, and false allegations of “war crimes” and violations of international law. (The discredited 2009 Goldstone report on Gaza is one of many examples of this process.)

Although often expressed in terms of opposition to the post-1967 Israeli occupation and settlements, the leaders of BDS campaigns repeatedly express their rejection of any Jewish right to self-determination, regardless of borders. The radical BDS movement supports Palestinian refugee demands, promotes the 1948 narrative of Palestinian victimization, and a “single state solution,” meaning the elimination of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people. In addition, [the network of church-based NGOs that fund and promote BDS often include antisemitic themes and images](#). Therefore, the claim that BDS will end if a two-state peace agreement is reached is inconsistent with the evidence.

The most effective and immediate strategy to blunt BDS and other forms of political warfare is to end the massive funding given to radical NGOs that promote these anti-Israel campaigns, particularly in Europe. NGO Monitor research has exposed tens of millions of Euros provided annually to NGOs via the EU and European governments. For more than ten years, this highly politicized NGO funding has been allocated for discriminatory anti-Israel warfare through secret processes under frameworks for humanitarian aid, democracy and human rights, and other universal moral principles. This money enables the network of ostensibly “non-political” organizations to flood the media, universities, parliaments and other platforms with a steady flow of anti-Israel demonization.

There are at least 80 such NGOs, active in promoting BDS in Europe, North America, and elsewhere. [Coalition of Women for Peace \(CWP\)](#) – the leading Israeli NGO promoting BDS – was funded directly by the European Union, via both the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights and the Partnership for Peace frameworks. (Requests for documents on these grants based on the EU’s freedom of information guidelines have been denied on the absurd grounds of “public security”.) Ali Abunimah and the NGO known as [Electronic Intifada](#) – among the most visible participants in BDS campaigns – have been funded indirectly by the Dutch government through the [Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation \(ICCO\)](#), which has an annual budget of over €80 million.

The role of government-funded Christian “humanitarian” groups in promoting obsessive anti-Zionism is much wider, including ICCO, Christian Aid (UK), Diakonia (Sweden), and Trocaire (Ireland). [ICCO is also involved in lobbying the Dutch pension funds to divest from Israeli banks](#) and versus cooperation with the [Mekorot water company](#). CWP, Electronic Intifada, and many Palestinian NGOs that receive European government funding are pressing Oxfam International, which receives funding from the UK, EU, Dutch, and other governments, to join the obsessive campaign against SodaStream. They want the humanitarian superpower to dismiss Scarlett Johansson as an Oxfam “ambassador” following the actress’s role in promoting the Israeli firm.

The first step in confronting European governments that provide most of the funds for these organizations is to demand the implementation of democratic transparency principles in Europe. This would expose the sources of influence behind this NGO funding to independent analysis, and highlight the systematic

abuse of European “soft power” for boycotts and demonization against Israeli democracy. On this basis, Israeli and European officials can negotiate mutually acceptable guidelines for funding political advocacy NGOs, which would prevent grants to groups that promote double standards, the discriminatory singling out of Israel, lawfare based on “war crimes” and similar false allegations, and the denial of the right of the Jewish people to sovereign equality.

While these measures will not bring an immediate end to BDS and political warfare, they constitute the essential first steps towards a viable counter-strategy.

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