

# Why Boycott Israel

*By Paul Grenville*

“In the past the world knew how to fight criminal policies. The boycott on South Africa was effective, but Israel is handled with kid gloves: its trade relations are flourishing, academic and cultural cooperation continue and intensify with diplomatic support.

This international backing must stop. That is the only way to stop the insatiable Israeli violence.

We are calling on the world to stop Israeli violence and not allow the continuation of the brutal occupation. We call on the world to condemn and not become an accomplice in Israel's crimes.”

The above is part of a document signed by leading Israeli artists, writers and intellectuals and ordinary citizens during the war on Gaza and published on January 7<sup>th</sup> 2009. It is not the first (see [www.matzpun.org](http://www.matzpun.org).) Matzpun is the Hebrew word for conscience. This IS a matter of conscience. If you knowingly buy Israeli goods you are complicit with the war crimes of the Israeli state. If you unknowingly buy Israeli goods now is the time to inform yourself, now is the time to stop. Not buying Israeli goods is ethical shopping.

Palestinian organizations have been calling for the boycott of Israeli goods for years. We should finally listen. The war on Gaza was not fought against an army, but against the civilian population with the most modern, deadly and in some cases illegal weapons. 1434 civilians died and over 5,000 were injured. Over 300 children died.

Gaza does not have an army. Gaza does not have an airforce. Gaza is an overcrowded strip of land bordering Egypt, contains nearly one and a half million Palestinians, many of whom are the descendants of those who fled southwards in 1948, driven out by the Jewish militias, an illegal act of ethnic cleansing, accompanied by massacres of unarmed civilians in Tantura, Deir Yassin and other villages, over 400 of which were then razed to the ground.

Israel has not changed its nature in the intervening years since its foundation in 1948. Schools, hospitals and police stations in Gaza were repeatedly targeted by the Israeli Air Force in January. Israeli soldiers confronted and killed unarmed civilians in their houses. Shells containing white phosphorous, an illegal weapon which burns human flesh down to the bone, were dropped on a UN school. A UN compound containing provisions and supplies for Palestinians, which repeatedly contacted the Israeli army beforehand, was shelled and set on fire. These are war crimes. Illegal

Dense Inert Metal Explosives (DIME for short) weapons were used in Gaza. These weapons shred the body and sheer off limbs leaving a stump that does not bleed. They are illegal. What is more, the killing goes on since the ceasefire. Gaza is now a killing field.

Gazan civilians cannot leave their cage. Gaza has been blockaded for three years. The blockade is illegal in International Law. The Palestinians of Gaza are malnourished for want of food. They continue to die for want of access to hospital treatment. Over 99% of Gazan children examined by psychiatrist Dr Khalid Dahlan have suffered trauma. Gaza is not allowed to trade. Gazan fisherman are not allowed to fish. The remains of the Gazan economy have been destroyed by the Israeli bombing. Antiquated sewerage systems have been smashed by the bombing. The water is not safe to drink. What is the word that describes Israel's treatment of Gaza? If you are in any doubt check out this article by a Jewish Israeli historian, Ilan Pappé, at <http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article6374.shtml> If you knowingly buy Israeli goods you are supporting this. Who can defend this? What am I talking about here? Ask yourself.

Things are not much better in the Palestinian West Bank, illegally occupied for 41 years by the Israeli army. Unemployment is 70% among the 3.1 million Palestinians there. Over 40% of the best Palestinian land on the West Bank has been illegally confiscated for illegal Jewish settlements. The illegal Jewish settlers bear arms and harrass and kill Palestinians constantly. 500,000 of them now live on illegally confiscated Palestinian land. The Israeli settlements pipe their sewage directly onto Palestinian farmland. No Palestinian is allowed to bear arms, unless he is working for the Israel state. There is no legal recourse for the Palestinians, either for the killings or for the land confiscations. A wall snakes across Palestinian land, isolating Palestinian towns like Qalqiliya, now entirely surrounded by a 25 foot wall, cutting off Palestinian villagers from their own olive groves and farmland. 600 checkpoints on the West Bank staffed by bored, frustrated youths of the Israeli Defence Forces, monitor and control all Palestinian movements. People are delayed for hours at checkpoints on the whim of the Israeli army, and women have given birth at a checkpoint and lost their babies. Over 11,000 Palestinians are in Israeli jails, many for years without charge. Many of them are under 18. 18,000 Palestinian homes have been illegally demolished on the West Bank since 1967.

Israel's treatment of the Palestinians in Gaza and West bank is far worse than Apartheid ever was. South African blacks were part of the Apartheid economy, not a surplus population with levels of unemployment running at 70% in the West Bank and over 80% in Gaza before the war. There was no question of ethnically cleansing the South African blacks from their homeland. Palestinians are not welcome or safe in Gaza and the West Bank, and increasingly they are not welcome as citizens of

Israel. Arbitrary mass arrests greeted the largest ever peaceful Israeli demonstration of 150,000 people in the Galilean village of Sakhnin. Peaceful Palestinian protests in Hebron on the West Bank were greeted with mass arrests and live ammunition (<http://palsolidarity.org/2009/01/3783>). Who can defend this? Who would tolerate it here? What is this democracy that the EU states embrace with open arms?

We saw the deafening silence of the international power elite, on both sides of the Atlantic, during the illegal war on Gaza. The international boycott of South Africa, coupled with the resistance of the ANC, was pivotal in bringing De Klerk to the negotiating table and ending the formal existence of Apartheid in South Africa. Israel is an even more oppressive case of colonial rule of a subject population, in which the UK has been complicit from the beginning.

I believe that a mass international boycott campaign can bring pressure to bear on the Israeli state to seek a resolution of the conflict with the native Palestinians that is based on the minimum requirements of justice and the International Consensus as represented by the United Nations annual vote on the resolution of the conflict, and the rulings of the International Court of Justice in the Hague, not the US Road Map to nowhere. This is the absolute minimum, and can only become an agenda for resolution of the conflict if made a demand of an international mass boycott movement.

Who cannot support this? Do not be complicit! Supporting the boycott in whatever form you can affirms your own dignity and morality in the face of illegality and immorality, and sends out a clear message both to the Israeli regime and our own rulers.

*[Here are some resources for further investigation:](#)*

<http://boycottisraelnow.com/about.htm>. A campaign started by Muslims

<http://www.bigcampaign.org>

<http://www.bdsmovement.net/?q=node/42> Jason Kunin, a Toronto Jew, on Why Boycott Israel?

<http://www.freegaza.org/en/home/658-a-call-from-within-signed-by-israeli-citizens>

[http://www.ifamericansknew.org/cur\\_sit/gazafactsheet.html](http://www.ifamericansknew.org/cur_sit/gazafactsheet.html) Understanding the Crisis in Gaza.

<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost/JPArticle/ShowFull&cid=1238354477394>. The Jerusalem Post. Boycott campaigns do make a difference.

<http://palestinevideo.blogspot.com/2009/03/apartheid-from-south-africa-to-israel-3.html>. Ronnie Kasrils, a South African Jew, on why Israeli treatment of the Palestinians is far worse than Apartheid.