

A DIVERSITY OF TACTICS BOYCOTT, DIVESTMENT, SANCTIONS WORLDWIDE

Omar joins the stage...

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OMAR: I am an engineer by profession, an artist by passion and a student of Philosophy.

I was born in exile, a son of refugees. I came back to Palestine in 1993 with my partner, who is a Palestinian citizen in the State of Israel.

I think every part of my experience has helped me in my work as a human rights defender.

I was part of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. That was my first formative experience in that type of global struggle, and I learned a lot.

The '*Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions of Israel*' (B.D.S.) was launched by the largest coalition in Palestinian society, in Palestine and in exile. We felt that international law had stopped at the door of Palestine, so we took matters into our own hands and we walked the South African path if you will. We were inspired by their anti-apartheid movement, the anti-colonial movement in India, the US Civil Rights movement and of course our own struggle. But our key inspiration comes from the decades-old, rich Palestinian heritage of popular nonviolent resistance to settler-colonialism.

B.D.S. is a collective Palestinian voice, an absolute majority, asking democratic citizens worldwide to join us, in pressuring city councils, churches, trade unions, companies, and ultimately governments to stop its links of complicity with Israel.

The cultural boycott is a very important part because cultural institutions play a key role in whitewashing or what we call art-washing of Israeli Apartheid and occupation.

It calls for something much more profound than help, *Do No Harm*. If an international artist comes to Tel Aviv, they are lending their name to a system of apartheid and oppression. That is not art for the sake of art, music for the sake of music, that is complicity.

The cultural boycott targets *complicity*, not identity. Urging the cancellation of events, activities, agreements, or projects involving the Israeli State, its lobby groups or its cultural institutions. To reject funding and sponsorship from the Israeli government.

No one is calling for suppressing the rights of Israeli artists. If the UK invites an Israeli filmmaker to show her film, with no institutional connection to the state of Israel, the embassy, or lobby groups, there is absolutely nothing in the boycott to prevent this.

Actually, BDS explicitly calls on Israelis to join us. Israelis who abandoned colonial ideology, policies and dehumanization, who recognise our three basic rights under international law; ending the occupation, ending Apartheid, and the right of return for refugees.

Since there is nothing Jewish about occupation, apartheid, ethnic cleansing, the siege of Gaza, and all the crimes committed, then there is nothing inherently anti-Jewish in proposing that this is against humanity and campaigning to end it.

Of course, there is anti-semitism that really bugs our minds, and it is growing every day in the West. B.D.S. was very clear from the beginning that we oppose all forms of racism, including antisemitism.

In fact, we don't see Palestine ever being liberated without an international movement for justice and equality winning the war for racial, indigenous, gender, economic and environmental justice, making this world better for everyone. In Ferguson, USA, after the first uprising when Michael Brown was killed, the Palestinians were one of the first to apply solidarity, because we understand oppression.

Since 2014 Israel started to consider B.D.S. a strategic threat. It is a fact that they have invested hundreds of millions of dollars to fight it. So they clearly do see the impact. It is extremely impressive how much the movement has grown in numbers.

They have started to target me personally, taking steps towards revoking my residency, repressing me with travel bans. The worst was when my late mother was undergoing surgery for cancer in Jordan, I wasn't allowed to leave to be with her.

Yes, I am worried for my life, and they use tools that don't show exactly who the culprit is. At a public conference in front of 200 people and the world's cameras, the Israeli Minister of Intelligence threatened me with "civil assassination." I had never heard this term before; possibly it means an assassination at the hands of civilians.

So it hurts on a personal level tremendously, but that is part of the price that all Palestinians pay, part of our resistance.

They are telling us you can't boycott Israel. So what do you want us to do?

You don't want us to do armed resistance, and you don't like our non-violent resistance.

...What do you want us to do? We shall never give up.