

How-To: Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS)

A toolkit for BDS campaigning

We acknowledge that APAN works on unceded First Nations land.

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Introduction

Welcome to the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) toolkit. This document is intended to give you all the information, skills, confidence, and tools you need to join the global BDS movement in support of a free Palestine and justice, equality, and human rights for Palestinians.

In the following pages you'll find an introduction to BDS and how the global movement works together, examples of BDS in action, ways that you can get involved and take action today, and resources for further listening, reading, and watching to continue your learning in this space.

If you're already familiar with BDS and ready to jump straight into taking action you can skip ahead to the **Take Action** section on page 20.

Whether you've been an activist in the BDS space for decades or you're at the beginning of your journey, **we're so glad you're here**. This toolkit is a live document that we want to make as useful as possible to people looking to take action in solidarity with Palestine so if you have any further questions about this toolkit or suggestions of ways we can improve it please email us at contact@apan.org.au.

We are grateful to the generous assistance of the Palestinian BDS National Committee and the DSA BDS and Palestine Solidarity Working Group in sharing resources and information to make this toolkit possible.

What is BDS?

BDS 101

Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) describes the strategy developed in Palestine in 2005 as a peaceful, civil-society means to pressure the Israeli government to comply with international law. BDS is a strategy for individuals outside of Palestine especially, upholding the simple principle that Palestinians are entitled to the same rights as the rest of humanity. Inspired by the South African anti-apartheid movement, the BDS call urges action to pressure Israel to comply with international law.

‘Boycotting’ has recently become a common term in conversations around strategies for Palestinian liberation, however BDS describes a specific type of boycotting and not all forms of boycotting are BDS. These concepts and terms such as ‘organic boycotts’ will be further discussed in this toolkit.

What is BDS?

Why do we need BDS campaigns?

BDS campaigns address corporations and institutions that are directly complicit in the violation of Palestinian rights. By focusing on a small number of companies and products, BDS works to force companies, institutions and governments to change their policies making it financially more difficult for Israel to oppress Palestinians.

Israel was formed in 1948 through the brutal displacement of nearly 800,000 Palestinians from their ancestral lands, and has maintained its control over historical Palestine through a regime of settler colonialism, apartheid and occupation.

In the West Bank, Palestinians face administrative detention – a form of arbitrary incarceration of men, women and children for an unspecified period of time without trial or charge – illegal annexation of land by forcibly displacing Palestinians and transferring Israeli settlers into their place, and further conditions that violate international law and human rights such as colonial infrastructure including checkpoints, watchtowers and illegal apartheid walls. Israel has also established illegal settlements, exploited Palestinian natural resources, confiscated Palestinian property and land, and used indiscriminate and deliberate armed force against Palestinians.

What is BDS?

Why do we need BDS campaigns?

Palestinian citizens of Israel are exclusively subjected to over 50 racist laws and segregation policies – these laws underpin the apartheid system – based on the distinction of Palestinians given the status of ‘citizens of Israel’, and settlers given the status of ‘Israeli Nationals’. These laws ensure Palestinians remain within designated ‘Arab departments’ which are under-funded and under-serviced, 6 times less funding for Palestinian children that are citizens of Israel, and restrictions that affect who Palestinians can marry if a spouse is from the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

In Gaza, Palestinians have been concentrated within a 16 year open air prison where Israeli restrictions on land, air and sea have pushed 80% of the Palestinians in Gaza under the poverty line. 70% of Palestinians in Gaza are refugees, displaced by Israel in 1948. The Israeli genocide in Gaza has made the situation even more catastrophic.

Israel’s regime of settler colonialism, apartheid and occupation over the Palestinian people is only possible because of the legitimacy that the international community confers on it. Governments fail to hold Israel to account, while corporations and institutions across the world help Israel to oppress Palestinians. Because those in power refuse to act to stop this injustice, in 2005 Palestinian civil society called for a global citizens’ response of solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for freedom, justice and equality. The BDS movement aims to show businesses that there is a financial cost for supporting apartheid Israel.

What is BDS?

How did the Palestinian BDS movement start?

In 2005, 170 Palestinian civil society organisations, including unions, refugee networks, women's organisations, professional associations, and popular resistance committees, called for boycotts, divestment and sanctions as a form of non-violent pressure on Israel.

The efforts to coordinate the BDS campaign culminated in the first Palestinian BDS Conference held in Ramallah in November 2007. Out of this conference emerged the BDS National Committee (BNC) as the Palestinian coordinating body for the BDS campaign worldwide. The BNC is now a broad Palestinian civil society coalition that works to lead and support the BDS movement for Palestinian rights.

What is BDS?

What are the aims of BDS?

Inspired by the South African anti-apartheid movement, the Palestinian BDS call urges nonviolent pressure on Israel until it complies with international law by meeting three demands as outlined on the [BNC website](#):

#1 - Ending its occupation and colonisation of all Arab lands and dismantling the Wall.

International law recognises the West Bank including East Jerusalem, Gaza and the Syrian Golan Heights as occupied by Israel. The wall includes the illegal apartheid wall in the West Bank used to create ghettos and separate Palestinian neighbourhoods, and in Gaza is used to enforce the siege turning into the largest open air prison in the world.

What is BDS?

What are the aims of BDS?

#2 - Recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality.

One-fifth of Israel's citizens are Palestinians who remained inside the armistice lines after 1948. They are subjected to a system of racial discrimination enshrined in more than 50 laws that impact every aspect of their lives. The Israeli government continues to forcibly displace Palestinian communities in Israel from their land. Israeli leaders routinely and openly incite racial violence against them.

#3 - Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN Resolution 194.

Since its violent establishment in 1948 through the ethnic cleansing of more than half of the indigenous people of Palestine, Israel has set out to control as much land and uproot as many Palestinians as it can. As a result of this systematic forced displacement, there are now more than 7.25 million Palestinian refugees. They are denied their right to return to their homes simply because they are not Jewish.

What is BDS?

What are boycotts, divestment, and sanctions?

BOYCOTTS involve withdrawing support from Israel's apartheid regime, complicit Israeli sporting, cultural and academic institutions, and from all Israeli and international companies engaged in violations of Palestinian human rights.

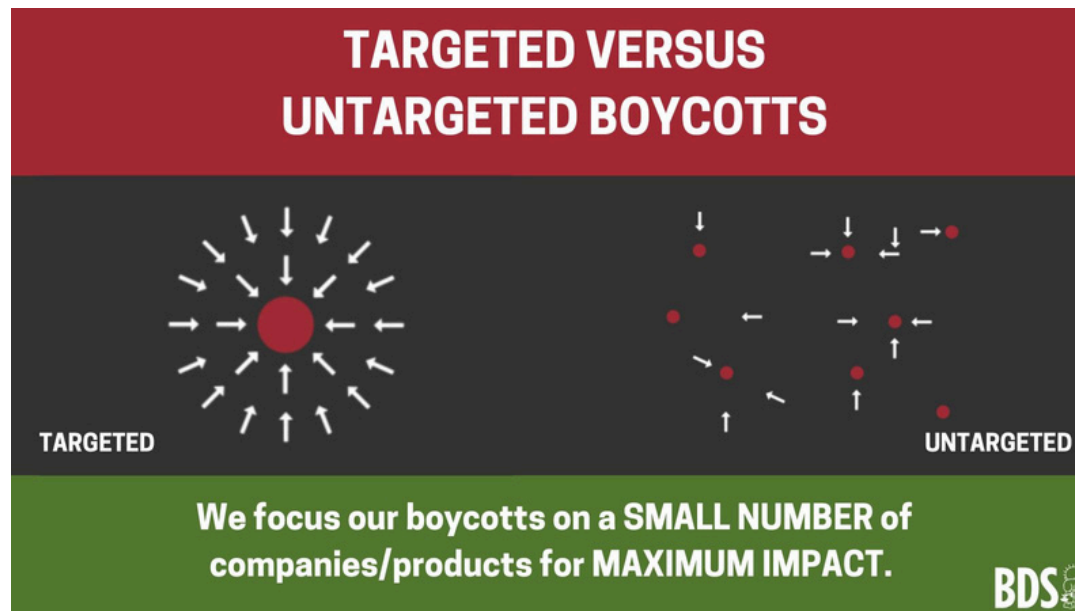
DIVESTMENT campaigns urge banks, local councils, superannuation funds, and universities to withdraw investments from the State of Israel and all Israeli and international companies that sustain Israeli apartheid.

SANCTIONS campaigns pressure governments to fulfil their legal obligations to end Israeli apartheid, and not aid or assist its maintenance, by banning business with illegal Israeli settlements, ending military trade and free-trade agreements, as well as suspending Israel's membership in international forums such as UN bodies, the Olympics, FIFA, and Eurovision.

What is BDS?

What should we boycott?

Targeted consumer boycotts are convincing retailers across the world to stop selling products from companies profiting from Israel's crimes. The Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC) calls for a boycott of Israeli and international companies that are complicit in violations of Palestinian rights. As the BNC website states: *"Virtually all Israeli companies are complicit to some degree in Israel's system of occupation and apartheid. We focus our boycotts on a small number of companies and products for maximum impact. We focus on companies that play a clear and direct role in Israel's crimes and where we think we can have an impact."*



What is BDS?

What should we boycott?

The BNC currently divides BDS targets into four categories to help make our action well coordinated across the globe to secure maximum impact.

- **Consumer boycott targets** - The BDS movement calls for a complete boycott of these brands carefully selected due to the company's proven record of complicity in Israeli apartheid.
- **Divestment and exclusion targets** - The BDS movement works to pressure governments, institutions, investment funds, city councils, etc. to exclude from procurement contracts and investments and to divest from, as the case may be, as many complicit companies as practical, especially arms companies and banks.
- **Pressure targets** - The BDS movement actively calls for pressure campaigns against these targets. This includes boycotts when reasonable alternatives exist, as well as lobbying, peaceful disruptions, and social media pressure.
- **Organic boycott targets** - The BDS movement did not initiate these grassroots boycott campaigns but supports them due to these brands' complicity in Israel's genocide and apartheid against Palestinians.

What is BDS?

What should we boycott?

The current BNC list of BDS targets as of May 2024 is below:

Act Now Against These Companies Profiting from the Genocide of the Palestinian People

BDS FREEDOM JUSTICE EQUALITY

Consumer boycott targets:	Divestment and exclusion targets:
     	    
     	     
Pressure targets:	Organic boycott targets:
      	     

What is BDS?

What should we boycott?

Often boycott campaigns may display leaflets or infographics like the one below. While many of these companies may be complicit in Israeli apartheid, this can often overwhelm people who are trying to figure out where to start. It can also dilute coordinated efforts which have a greater and more impactful effect. BDS uses strategic targeted boycotts of products to concentrate efforts. In Australia, current consumer boycotts include HP, SodaStream, Caltex, and Obela.



What is BDS?

‘Ethical consumerism choices’ vs targeted boycotts

The graphic on page 15 is clearly not an exhaustive list of every business that is complicit in and/or profiting from Israel’s occupation and apartheid. In the last six months we have watched Israel’s genocide and war crimes escalate while being broadcast around the world. Many of us are looking for actions to take to channel our outrage, despair, and fear, and to do anything and everything we can to stop Israel’s genocidal actions.

This has seen many people personally boycotting any and all brands who have stated support for apartheid Israel, and while every dollar counts the BNC’s strategy that APAN endorses is that consumer boycotts are most effective when taken as a collective action, and BDS isn’t just about consumer boycotts.

What is BDS?

‘Ethical consumerism choices’ vs targeted boycotts

The BNC gives the following advice about strategic BDS campaigns: *“More important than our own personal investments and purchases, which are symbolic gestures but not impactful alone, is working within an organisation, union, or coalition to organise effective, strategic campaigns and build power globally to support the Palestinian struggle. So when you see massive lists of dozens and dozens of companies to boycott going around on social media – please keep in mind that the goal isn’t to boycott as many companies as possible, as very few people can feasibly sustain such extensive boycotts over a long time.”*

We know that in our current capitalist system, being able to choose what products you do and don’t buy based on ethics alone is a privilege. We want our movement to be welcoming and accessible to anyone who wants to stand in solidarity with Palestinians. We encourage everyone to focus their attention on the BNC targets as a matter of priority while also encouraging people to make additional personal consumption choices that line up with your ethics as and when you can.

BDS case study: Puma

Under the Israel Football Association (IFA) are six clubs which operate in illegal Israeli settlements. The IFA allows football clubs based in illegal Israeli settlements to participate in its leagues and competitions. Hundreds of Palestinian children have had their schools demolished, and sewage from settlements contaminates the fields where they play, while across the road they see the lush green Israeli football fields on stolen Palestinian land.

Global sportswear manufacturer Puma is the main sponsor of the Israel Football Association (IFA), which includes teams in Israel's illegal settlements on occupied Palestinian land. Puma's sponsorship of the IFA means they are directly involved in violations of international law and human rights.

PUMA has been the target of a worldwide BDS campaign since 2018 over its support for Israeli apartheid oppressing millions of Palestinians. More than 200 Palestinian sports clubs have called on Puma to end the sponsorship deal and stop supporting Israel's illegal land grabs. Puma markets itself as a company that cares about equality yet continued to fund the apartheid the IFA helps sustain.

BDS case study: Puma

Since the #BoycottPUMA campaign started people all around the world have been taking BDS actions including:

- Protesting and occupying Puma offices and shops;
- Convincing sporting teams, athletes, artists, and stores to dump PUMA;
- Filling Puma's inbox and jamming its phone lines;
- Taking over Puma's online presence calling out its lies and hypocrisy;
- Boycotting Puma products.

In a huge win for the BDS movement, in December 2023 Puma announced it wouldn't be renewing its contract with the IFA (which ends in December 2024).

The years of relentless, global BDS pressure on Puma and the damage to its image should be a lesson to all companies supporting Israeli apartheid, that complicity has consequences. It is also a lesson to the deeply complicit, Western-dominated FIFA, which continues to shield Israel from accountability despite the settlement teams violating its own statutes.

You can read more about the Puma campaign including a timeline of successful tactics and win on the BNC website here: <https://bdsmovement.net/boycott-puma-timeline>.

Take action

The impact of BDS actions is both practical and symbolic. Every dollar you don't spend at a BDS target business is a dollar less that goes towards supporting apartheid Israel. Your BDS actions also send a clear message to businesses that there is a financial and reputational cost of supporting Israel's illegal settlements and war crimes.

There are so many ways to participate in the BDS movement. We begin the below list with personal actions as a great place to start, and then move onto collective actions as inspiration for how you can take your BDS campaigning to a wider audience and amplify our impact.

Personal consumer boycotts

The easiest way to get involved in the BDS movement is to start personally boycotting the products and companies that are on the current BDS targeted boycott list (check out the graphic on page 14 for the list as of April 2024).

If a product on the BDS boycott list is a product you would usually buy, we encourage you to buy an alternate product that does not have ties to apartheid Israel. An example of this is boycotting Caltex petrol stations by refuelling your car at a different petrol station or boycotting Sabra and Obela hummus/dips and purchasing a different brand of hummus/dip instead.

Take action

Personal consumer boycotts are also a great conversation starter with other people in your life about the BDS movement and the fight for Palestinian human rights, justice, and equality. The power of your personal consumer boycott actions are multiplied with every person you inspire and encourage to join you so step one is boycotting these products yourself and then step two is telling your friends and family about your decision to boycott and encouraging them to join you!

Check your Superfund

All across the globe campaigns are forming to ensure that superannuation and retirement funds are not invested in companies linked to Israel's ongoing genocide.

Here in Australia super funds have hundreds of millions of dollars of Australian retirement savings invested in companies complicit in the oppression of Palestinians. This is why we're running a **collective divestment campaign** rather than encouraging individuals to move from one fund to another. An individual choosing to move their super to a different fund makes a very small difference to the financial position of these funds, this action is targeted to demand super funds completely divest from all those companies complicit in the occupation of Palestine. Investment managers must realise that there is a real financial consequence to being linked to Israel's ongoing genocide.

Take action

By being part of the BDS movement and participating in the superfund divestment campaign, you are joining a collective of people all over the world who are running similar campaigns to ensure that their and our retirement savings are not supporting Israel's apartheid. BDS campaigns targeting super or retirement funds have had huge wins overseas including in New Zealand, Scotland, the UK, Norway and Denmark. Our Check your Super campaign aims to build on this global pressure and secure similar BDS wins here in Australia.

You can find out more about the Check your Super campaign and take action here:
www.bdsaustralia.net.au/check-your-superfund.

Take action

Collective targeted BDS campaigns

Personal actions are a great way to get started as an introduction to the BDS movement but what truly makes this movement powerful is when we take collective action to amplify our impact. We know we are strongest when we are united and that when we join together we have the power to run big, ambitious campaigns to call on our universities, employers, local councils, and cultural institutions to boycott, divest, and sanction Israel and the businesses that support its illegal actions.

There are many different kinds of collective BDS campaigns to choose from, and you can select the most strategic and achievable targets in your own local context. Examples of different types of collective BDS campaigns are listed on the next page.

Take action

- **Municipal boycott:** a local council or city ends contracts with companies that support apartheid Israel.
- **Academic boycott:** a university (or department) or academic association ends institutional collaboration with Israeli academic institutions.
- **Sports boycott:** Teams refuse to play against official Israeli teams, or Israel gets suspended from the Olympics or Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA).
- **Consumer boycott:** a grocery store stops selling Israeli products.
- **Cultural boycott:** a celebrity cancels a performance in Israel, or an event by an Israeli “cultural ambassador” or sponsored by Israel (or anti-Palestinian lobby groups) is cancelled, or Israel is suspended from international events like Eurovision.
- **Divestment:** A city or local council, university, trade union, or superannuation fund withdraws its investments in corporations and banks complicit in apartheid Israel.

Take action

As the BDS movement continues to grow, many activists often wonder what institution or corporation to target most effectively and how. Given our limited human capacity, we want to be strategic with the targets we select. The BDS movement does not actually launch a boycott campaign against every boycottable event, product or institution, because that would make it impossible to achieve concrete results. We encourage you to think about the following criteria when selecting which of the BNC BDS targets to focus your campaigning efforts on:

Level of complicity of the company or institution: The deeper the complicity of the company/institution, the easier and more compelling it is to mobilise BDS pressure against it. There are hundreds of international companies and institutions that are in some way complicit, but not all to the same degree. For example, a company arming the Israeli military is clearly more complicit than a company selling its beauty products in Israel. Understanding how a company or institution is complicit in Israel's apartheid regime and violations of international law through factual research helps us prioritise our targets.

In Australia, BDS campaigns aimed at companies with the highest level of complicity and harm include targeting companies that manufacture weapons and weapons parts that are sold to Israel, and campaigning for the Australian federal and state and territory governments to end all military trade with Israel.

Take action

Potential level of impact of a BDS campaign: We want our campaigns to have the biggest possible impact so it's useful to think about what organisations, institutes, or companies you are already connected to (e.g. your local sports club, workplace, local council, university etc) who you could convince to boycott, divest, or sanction apartheid Israel and the companies who are complicit in its crimes.

These campaigns are most successful when you link up with other people and organise together. For example, while making the personal consumer choice to not buy a HP laptop as an individual is a good start, campaigning with your colleagues to ask your workplace to change their procurement policy so they no longer buy HP computers for any new staff will have more of an impact and send a stronger message.

Take action

Tools and tips for BDS campaigning

The BNC highlights the following tools to help make your BDS campaigning as strategic and impactful as possible:

- **Power mapping** – who are the decision makers, who is best placed to pressure them, and how can we most effectively do so? Do you have any allies on the inside? What kind of opposition do you think you'll be up against, and how can you prepare for that ahead of time?
- **A public engagement strategy** - how are you going to educate the public and get them onside with your campaign? Examples include hosting informational events like teach-ins, and coalition building with organisations in your area who might be interested in campaigning together on the issue or who can offer support for your campaign.
- **A timeline for escalation of your campaign** - picking strategic dates for certain actions – such as delivering a petition during a board meeting of the company you're targeting. Is peaceful disruption (sit-in, peaceful occupation, flashmob, collective supermarket action, etc.) a useful tactic to consider, at the right time, in your strategy?

Take action

Tools and tips for BDS campaigning

- **Join a local action group** - joining a grassroots action group can be a great way to connect up with other people in your area who also care about Palestine and want to work together. All over the continent there are new groups forming every week, you can find a list of grassroots action groups here: <https://apan.org.au/local-groups/>

Historically, some of the biggest and most successful BDS campaigns have taken years of strategic planning, organising, and network building to pull off – so don't be discouraged if it doesn't happen for you right away. It's worth being detailed, strategic and intentional in your planning and outreach. The South African anti-apartheid movement organised for decades to gain broad international support leading up to the fall of apartheid; and apartheid did fall. Freedom is inevitable. The time is now to take action to join the movement for freedom, justice, and equality in Palestine.

Extra Resources

The official Palestinian BDS National Committee website

<https://bdsmovement.net>

Visualizing Palestine's interactive timeline of BDS successes

<https://visualizingpalestine.org/collective-action-timeline/>

BNC collection of successful BDS case studies

<https://bdsmovement.net/impact>

Apartheid Free Zones toolkit

https://bdsmovement.net/sites/default/files/TOOLKIT_BDS_PRINT.pdf