

Divestment From Israel In Its Fifth Year:

a history and method for US and European activists

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Introduction

The purpose of this article is to introduce the notion of *Divestment from Israel* to activists involved in Palestine work and equip others who are well versed in the topic with tools that can systematically advance the struggle against the Apartheid State of Israel, who is in turn a proxy of US imperialism. We start from the assumption that victory is an accumulation of incremental successes and that a systematic approach is necessary to maintain a positive trend of accumulation. We assert a discourse that is consistent with the objective of dismantling the *exclusionary-racist* structures of Israel, and then we propose a sector-based approach to tactically proliferate the discourse. We end with a “cookbook” for launching a divestment movement in different contexts.

Over the past four years, much was written about divestment in the Arab, U.S. and Israeli press. Palestinians and Arabs have had the least controversy over the subject matter as there continues to be a consensus that UN resolution 3379, declaring that Zionism was Racism should have never been repealed. The predominant analysis among Palestinians and much of the Arab population attributes the repeal of 3379 to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the US as the primary hegemonic power over the UN and the globe. Palestinians do not need to look far to find glaring evidence of the racist nature of the State of Israel, as it demolishes their homes, kills their children, imprisons their men and women, engages in the most brutal forms of modern-day torture and continues to exile more than 4.5 million people who have lost their livelihood more than 50 years ago. The campaign to ethnically cleanse Palestine from its indigenous inhabitants went into full force in 1948 and continues to this very day. Both liberal and hawkish Zionists confiscated land, illegally killed Palestinians, constructed illegal colonial settlements, illegally exiled individuals and broke up families, and finally are manifesting half a century of exclusionary outlook by literally building a wall that separates Jewish immigrant from non-Jewish indigenous Palestinian.

Within the US context, many organizations attempted to use Divestment in order to advance their institutional standing to recruit and gain name recognition. Other organizations placed tactical

demands that are consistent with US policy in terms of creating a post-Oslo fait-a-complis. Others saw Divestment as a threat that cannot be ignored and chose to adopt it solely for the purpose of containment. Most, however, embraced its justice-oriented agenda and sought to advance it. Organizations that sought to advance the notion of a Jewish-only state, cleansed of the indigenous Palestinian, worked hard on pushing forward Palestinian statehood as an alternative to return. Such organizations depend heavily on support from donors who identify as Zionist and see that Israel should continue to exist as a Jewish-only state and would not tolerate an effective tool in countering the Zionist program.

As for Zionist institutions, they correctly read that Divestment is a historically relevant movement for Israel as it transforms itself from a colonial-settler state, bent on expansion and extermination to an apartheid one that is bent on maintaining demographic supremacy, and thus it suffers from the same vulnerabilities that apartheid South Africa did. Within the US, Zionist forces had a varied response that ranged from measured to all-out threat of violence. Somewhere in the middle were hurled accusations of anti-Semitism and criminal activity in support of "terror." Observing their response over the past five years has been a reaffirmation that this movement can be one of the most efficacious forms of addressing Israeli apartheid at the global solidarity level.

This movement calls for institutions to divest from the State of Israel, individuals to boycott Israeli goods and for advocates to lobby for ending governmental aid to Israel. Despite the tactical demands, there is only one strategic call: Material isolation of Israel until Palestinian exiles are repatriated to their towns of origin and receive reparation for lives and properties destroyed by Israel. Only then, would the Zionist dream become strategically challenged.

Background

It is no coincidence that proponents of the current Bush administration are overseeing the worst campaign of ethnic cleansing and demographic separation conducted by the State of Israel. These were the same proponents of the racist apartheid regime that viewed the ANC struggle for racial equality and decolonization a threat to global capitalism and security, and therefore advancing terror and communist ideology. Their view of the Palestinian Democratic-National Liberation Movement parallels that, with the added advantage that they leverage the fear of September 11th attacks, attacks on Europe, as well as the dominant position the US enjoys as the only superpower in the world. The US plan in the Arab World is to conquer and dominate raw and labor resources, with the use of Israel as the only regional military and nuclear power. In fact, Israel's inorganic disposition and its racist nature provide a perceived existential dependency. Proponents of US Empire work hard to deepen the racist-exclusionary nature of Israel through their support of the Zionist right, whether in Likud or Labor parties.

The current vice president, Dick Cheney, supported the imprisonment of Nelson Mandela and repeatedly argued for CIA support for the apartheid administrations in South Africa. In today's unbalanced world, such flagrantly racist calls for colonization, displacement and brutalization of the Palestinian people often pass unchecked, and have become the accepted norm in the US public media.

South African people liberated South Africa. Similarly, Palestinian people will liberate Palestine. Both movements share one important facet (no, not the fight against apartheid): they enjoy a moral position that is unassailable and is consistent with the advancement of peoples throughout history. They both call for liberation, decolonization and most importantly, individual and collective equality in the national, ethnic and civil sense.

Each movement of resistance requires more than moral support to win. It requires material support for the daily civil and militant activities in colliding with its oppressors, as well as the material isolation to limit the global power and prominence of its oppressor. In a war of attrition, the oppressor will attempt to expand its influence and minimize the challenging role of the oppressed by diversifying its relationships and resources. Divestment movements in support of South Africa, led by the African American organizations in the US and social justice movements world wide chose to isolate the apartheid regime culturally, politically and economically. We choose to isolate Israel in the following economic forms: Divestiture, Boycott and Ending all government aid.

Origins of the Divest From Israel Movement in the US

In 1980's, many universities and public institutions legislated in their respective congresses that investment in apartheid states should be banned, in response to the movement against South Africa. Many progressive forces at universities attempted to piggy back resolutions on Israel, but the movement was not organized enough to counter the onslaught of Israeli financial backing for the defense of Zionism. There were a few attempts in the late 80's that created the seeds of today's flourishing movement.

During the 1990's the Palestine Solidarity Committee attempted its first and limited exercise of divestment by focusing on the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It launched the "Don't Pay For Occupation" Campaign. Although the campaign achieved many political aims, it failed to present a strategy of how one should not pay for occupation.

At the beginning of Al Aqsa Intifadah, the call to divest came as a shock to many, as it came from an unexpected source: the Palestinian organizations living within the green line, in land conquered in 1948. Palestinian organizations in the 1967 occupied territories and refugee camps in exile then endorsed the call. On November 29th, 2000, on the International Day in Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the Free Palestine Alliance, Al-Awda coalition, Justice in Palestine coalition and prominent anti-war forces led a very broad coalition effort calling for justice in Palestine, as a culmination of global efforts aiming at achieving Palestinian repatriation. San Francisco was the launching ground, where the Justice in Palestine Coalition, went into the streets and chalked body figures of fallen martyrs on the pavements. They called for divestment, boycott and ending all US aid to Israel, until Palestinians are repatriated. Shortly afterwards, in February of 2001, Students for Justice in Palestine held the first conference on divestment at the University of California Berkeley. The points of unity of that conference reaffirmed the support for the aspirations of the Palestinian people and set nationally coordinated days of action, including April 9th commemorating the massacre of Deir Yassin to highlight Israeli ethnic cleansing from its outset. Every year since then, the Divest-From-Israel Movement has organized an annual conference on university campuses, always managing to unleash the wrath of federal, state and local governments in addition to Zionist forces. Over time, the effects of that wrath have diminished and the divestment message has gotten stronger. Today, many organizations have adopted this campaign and passed resolutions to divest from Israel, most notably the Presbyterian Church in North America. Branches of the Methodist and Anglican churches have recently followed suite. These developments are hugely significant, and if utilized properly, the church movements can set a networking foundation throughout Europe and the US that is impenetrable by Zionist and governmental interests.

The Divest-From-Israel movement has always enjoyed international solidarity since UN resolution 3379 was passed in 1975. There was the great Arab boycott that later spread into non-aligned countries. Many nations issued passports that said not valid in South Africa and the State of Israel. Today the movement is coming back in a much more sophisticated and grassroots form. In 2004, a resolution was even introduced in the UK parliament to divest from Israel, and there were even efforts in Brussels at the EU governance level. It is important to point out that a newer version of the Arab boycott aimed at targeting all corporations that do business in Israel is back in full force, in Lebanon, Egypt and some of the Persian Gulf nations.

Definitions

The following are definitions representing the three facets of the divestment effort:

Divestiture is shifting capital away from Israel by forcing institutions to pull their funds out of Israeli private and public investments. By creating an environment

that is historically aware of the injustices of US racism and European colonialism, then highlighting the abhorrent actions that Israel commits to keep demographic purity, an investment in Israel becomes a political statement as an investment in racism and genocide. Within the current polarization of US society, non-Europeans and immigrants are beginning to take the brunt of US economic policies and heightened jingoism. Racism is not selective and will always generalize in an atmosphere of ignorance. Such polarization creates natural allies in the movement for divestment. By creating coalitions with movements for economic justice, racial equality, civil liberties, environmentalism, gender and preference equality, peace, human rights and social justice in the US, considerable pressure can be applied on investors in Israel's racist-exclusionary model.

Academic institutions are some of the largest international investors in the US. Often investments need not make economic sense, but are simply registering political support for a hyper-nationalist agenda, such as support for Israel. The Divestment movement aims to make it politically unacceptable for academic institutions to engage in such monetary support of private Israeli firms or investment in Israeli government bonds.

The movement also aims to limit cultural exchanges between universities and public forums, such as unions, museums, theater etc... by highlighting that much of the nascent Israeli culture is a vulgarized and expropriated form of Palestinian heritage. Israeli airline workers were reported to wear the Palestinian "thawb" the traditional embroidered dress. Israeli national dish is said to be falafel. Many of the olive trees that were uprooted from the West Bank were replanted for new Israeli enterprising activities. To support cultural exchange with the Israeli State is to support the expropriation of Palestinian indigenous culture and livelihood.

A similar argument is applied to tourism. Again universities organize trips to Israel, to expropriated land where villages were demolished and villagers were cleansed. Many of the students going to kibbutzim, do not appreciate that these were the early colonies of the Zionist campaign that categorized Palestinians as undesirable labor, then promptly cleansed the population and replaced the force with Jewish labor.

Many opportunities exist to argue that an investment in Israel is a bad financial choice. Retirement accounts ought to reduce volatility and the mere fact that there exists a divestment movement that highlights political instability, is a statement of risk. Within that context, many fund contributors are active listeners of the Divestment movement. Universities, large non-profits and state government employers run the largest retirement accounts.

Boycott is a potent political tool. It is impossible to regulate and difficult to oppose. Boycott has much less direct economic impact, but it is a necessary tool for divestiture to accelerate. The movement to boycott Israeli products in the US educates the individual about the need to reject Israel as a racist-exclusionary state. To purchase an Israeli product is to take an individual position in support of Israel's criminal action against the indigenous people of Palestine. Boycotting Israeli goods is a political statement that is easy to make and easy to proliferate.

Specifically, if the boycott movement reaches its full potential, it would not represent more than 3-4% of monetary damage to Israel, relative to that of the financial movement. The financial divestiture movement, on the other hand, can be empowered by community boycott efforts. Such efforts could aim to:

1. De-shelve Israeli products at local stores, progressive cooperatives and other purveyors of "Middle-Eastern cultural goods."
2. Target Israeli cultural exports of food and dress and expose their cooptation of the culture of an ethnically cleansed population, still awaiting return.
3. Ask local stores to carry an emblem or a decal stating that they do not carry Israeli goods, as an added advantage to increase business.

The boycott struggle is a struggle of numbers. In contrast, divestiture is that of power balance. The numbers can be easily accumulated within the boycott context. How many protests could the Zionist organizations mobilizing all of their resources hold in front of local corner stores that selected to carry a decal, declaring that they are apartheid-free zones? Cooperatives? Unions? Museums? Conferences? The total membership to Zionist forces represents a tiny minority of the general population. In the US, the Jewish community in total represents 2% of the population. Only a minority of that community subscribes to the values of Zionism and a minority of that subcategory is active in the Zionist movement today. Every boycotting outfit will be another step for the local university, union, or state employees retirement account in pulling billions of dollars out of the oppressive Israeli state and will deal morale blow in the court of public opinion.

Ending Aid to Israel is the apex of success in this movement. We understand that lobbying a legislative body of a nation that is moving towards extreme right wing ideological tendencies has limited results. The question of aid to Israel should

never be dropped. After all, it is the working people who sustain US economy, not the major corporations. Tax day ought to be a reminder to every filer that their money is taken out of local schools, hospitals, social infrastructure and sent to Israel in billions of dollars in the form of direct aid, and military Apache, Cobra, Phantom, Caterpillar and other vehicles of destruction. Every cutback can be linked to US policies of aggression and its support of Israel. Democracy at the local level can build bases of resistance in a long fight towards achieving the goal.

Finally, it is important to remind the public in every political context that aid to Israel is in violation of US and international law. No country that stands in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention should receive military aid to further violate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In a fair international court, Israel stands guilty of many war crimes and crimes against humanity. In addition, under the foreign assistance act, US law prohibits aid to flow to countries that use the aid, in this case military, for the abuse of human rights. Israel does not only abuse the human rights of Palestinians, it is conducting a slow campaign of genocide, as its aim is to destroy Palestine in part or in whole. Although the current atmosphere in the US is tolerant to abuses of international law, these attitudes tend to ebb and flow. As for Israel, it has been a consistent violator of human rights and international law ever since the Zionist gangs were formed, well before the declaration of independence.

Strategy

The strategic goal of the US-based movement is to peacefully disrupt the continuity and evolution of Zionist ideology and its aspiration to achieve regional and global dominance by shifting politics from the realm of discourse to the realm of material activism. It views the need to organize in the US, the primary monetary supporter of Israel, as crucial and aims to dismantle the exclusionary-racist character of Israel as the primary manifestation of Zionist ideology by occluding mobility of capital. The starting point in this effort is to mount material resistance to offset US governmental and corporate support through political isolation, divestiture, boycott and calls for ending US aid to Israel.

One need not engage in a deep discussion of the theoretical and historic framework from which Zionism emerged to recognize that Israel is racist and exclusionary. The policies of the state that have been discussed earlier are self-evident, and are a natural outgrowth of its inherent character. To state the obvious, establishing an ethnically pure state for an immigrant population must result in the ethnic cleansing of the indigenous people of the land, on which the state was conceived.

The strategic goal for divestment stems from the following assumptions:

1. The Zionist movement demonstrated its immoral outlook and disregard for humanity by the eradication of over 500 towns and villages, the displacement of 2/3 of the Palestinian people and the numerous atrocities and massacres conducted since the creation of the Zionist state in 1948.
2. There can be no peace or liberation as long as there exists an exclusionary-racist ideology that aims to dispossess the Palestinian people, no matter on what structure a Palestinian state may form. Israel is a settler-colonial state and Zionism is a natural enemy of peace in the region.
3. Zionism is an anti-Semitic ideology in the European sense and the literal sense. Starting with the literal, Arabs are ethnically Semitic people, and Palestinian Arabs are racially excluded from living on their land through the dispossession campaign prosecuted by the European leaders of the state, for the mere fact that they do not follow the Jewish persuasion. In addition, Arab Jews in Israel do not enjoy the same treatment as

European Jews. As for the first assertion, we will omit all the numerous references to Zionist collaboration with the Nazi exterminators and choose to quote one of the founders of Israel, David Ben Gurion, addressing the precursor of the Labor Party, MAPAI, in 1938 after Nazi anti-Jewish Pogroms:

"If I knew it would be possible to save all the Jewish children in Germany by brining them to England, and only half of them by transporting them to Eretz Israel, then I would opt for the second alternative. For we must weigh not only the life of these children but also the history of the people of Israel. (Uri Davis, *Apartheid Israel*, Zed Books, 2003, p.19)

Advocates of Palestinian freedom need not be intimidated into silence as history is on their side. The Divestment movement calls for the repatriation of all Palestinian refugees, even if it means the end of Zionism. Political Zionism is an exclusionary-racist aberration that need not continue in the enlightened era of the 21st century.

Organizational Form and Unified Discourse

Proponents of Divestment From Israel aim to make it a mass movement. Mass movements unite organizations with different trends and persuasion behind a common interest, or a common moral objective. This movement carries both. The diversity of the movement makes it impossible to centralize or command with any structure. In fact, proponents of Divestment have agreed that movement's decentralization will achieve maximum outcome, especially in light of the US governmental targeting of activists and Israeli extra judicial and illegal activities. Not only that there is safety in numbers, there is also power in individual conviction and collective action.

The annual conferences have given birth to many resources and organizing manuals. UC Berkeley Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), Duke University and the Palestine Solidarity Movement (PSM), Rutgers University, Wayne State University, Global Exchange and the Divestment Resource Center provide an informational model on their websites, similar to the New York and Los Angeles offices led by ANC activists during the anti-apartheid struggle. We will list the three most important political points of unity that forge the fabric of this movement, between student, community member and advocate:

1. Divestment, with its three facets as defined above, from the State of Israel will continue until the Palestinian people achieve the following demands, that are enshrined but not limited to, international law, human rights and basic standards of justice. These include:

- a. the recognition and implementation of the right of return and repatriation for all Palestinian refugees to their original homes or towns with reparations paid for lost properties and lives;
 - b. the full decolonization of all land occupied after 1967 of Jewish-Only settlement colonies, which are illegal under international law;
 - c. the end of the Israeli military occupation of the Gaza Strip and West Bank, including East Jerusalem and all Arab lands;
 - d. an end to the Israeli system of Apartheid and discrimination against the indigenous Palestinian population, within the green line, in the 1967 territories, and in exile.
2. It is not the place of the Divestment movement to dictate the strategies or tactics adopted by the Palestinian and Arab peoples in their struggle for liberation.
 3. Just as the Movement condemns the racism and discrimination inherent in Zionism underlying the policies and laws of the State of Israel, the Movement rejects any form of hatred or discrimination against any group based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, or sexual orientation. The Movement's strength is in the great diversity of its membership. The Movement welcomes individuals of all ethnic and religious backgrounds to join in solidarity with the struggle for justice in Palestine.

Establishing a discourse on Israel

The most important fabric of any mass movement is its coherence of outlook. In this context, coherence translates to consistency of strategic goals, coordination of action and an agreement in analysis that is used for expanding the movement and recruitment of qualitative talent. Coherence allows proponents of Divestment to propagate the same messages in different institutions at different geographical locations, across all sectors until a critical mass is achieved resulting in a marked shift in consensus and eventually the balance of powers. Coherence is essential in a decentralized movement because a battle victory at one institution is immediately transferable to another carrying the same objectives. In this case all the efforts invested in the movement should point largely towards the strategic goals. In addition, the movement requires

an analysis of Israel that is consistent with the indigenous narrative of the Palestinian people, if it were to further the struggle of a people with whom it stands in solidarity.

We propose a vision for the future that is all encompassing and universal in its humanistic and just character, thus leading to a peaceful resolution of the so-called Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The movement calls for a societal model that supports the indigenous struggle for equality against military, cultural and economic colonization and for the material recognition of the oppressor's society's humanity. We build on the legacy of Frantz Fanon, Che Guevara and other leading thinkers of the decolonization movement by extending the idea that when the oppressed is liberated from the shackles of dehumanization, the oppressor stands to gain by rehumanizing the internal workings of its society, because we recognize that the society of the oppressor carries its own internal injustices. Our discourse on Israel should therefore be uplifting, empowering and inviting for all people who spend time examining the objective realities of Israeli injustices.

The Legal Argument

Since its inception, Israel was created for one people at the expense of another. Political Zionism started with the artificial concept that Jews represent a nation in exile, not simply a religious persuasion. This nation in exile must therefore establish a nation-state for its Jewish nationals. The Israeli declaration of independence clearly states that the "Jewish People of Palestine [i.e. the colonists of Palestine] and the Zionist Movement... proclaim the establishment of the Jewish State in Palestine." Ever since this proclamation, Zionist political parties all agreed that in order to project that Israel is a democratic state, not a Jewish-Only ethnocracy, that Israel should not have a constitution or any defined borders. One fundamental law that explicitly defines Jewish Nationals as the masters of the land above all others was the covenant between the Government of Israel and The World Zionist Organization, whose charter is to acquire land and maintain the land for Jews only. Ever since then, Israel passed law after law targeting Palestinians without clearly stating the exclusive rights of Jews since it is already codified in the covenant as well as the declaration of independence without any constitutional charter to measure these laws against.

Thus, Israel claims it is the only democracy in the Middle East because it holds elections and allows the remaining Palestinians, carrying Israeli citizenship within the green line, to participate in voting and running for office. To paraphrase George Bisharat, a law professor at Hastings in San Francisco from a lecture he gave in 2001, Israel cannot be qualified as a democracy as long as the following is maintained:

1. Israel was founded by ethnically cleansing the majority of the Palestinian population, both Muslim and Christian. By denying them the right to

entry and participation in the political process, it guarantees Jewish domination. Moreover, Israel gives the right to any person who fits the definition of a Jew the right to immigrate, immediate citizenship and hold land in Palestine, thus becoming an Israeli Jewish National.

2. Both in law and in policy, important entitlements and services are allocated within the state along ethno-religious lines. Most importantly, it is virtually impossible for a Palestinian citizen of Israel (an Israeli citizen does not necessarily fall into the category of a “Jewish National”) to purchase land, especially if the Jewish National Fund, the monetary arm of the Jewish Agency and that of The World Zionist Organization described above, allocated it.
3. Israel has completely disenfranchised Palestinians in the Occupied Territories for thirty-eight years under a harsh military regime, while operating, for most purposes, as a single polity. Had Israel ruled the West Bank and Gaza Strip for a couple of years, that would be one thing, but the length of time Israel has held the Occupied Territories greatly exceeds the time it did not (by almost exactly double, at this point). Palestinians in the territories cannot vote since they are not Israeli citizens, nor can they return to their towns of origin inside the green line.

Denying Palestinians exiles entry and denying Palestinians living in 1967 the right to vote in effect nullify their citizenship and legal existence. In contrast, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states:

1. Everyone has a right to a nationality,
2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change nationality.

The Fourth Geneva convention, on the other hand explicitly prohibits the removal of people from their land and the demographic alteration of occupied land by occupier.

In conclusion, it is easy to prove that Israel is an apartheid state worse than that of historically apartheid South Africa:

1. Within the territory occupied by Israel in 1948 and referred to as the green line, Israel practices the laws of apartheid on behalf of the legal category of Jewish Nationals against those who do not classify as such;
2. Within the Occupied Territories, effectively annexed since 1967, Israel holds 3.3 million Palestinian exiles under complete military dominance and continues to displace them and confiscate their land for the construction of Jewish-only colonies. Even if there was a future Palestinian state to emerge in the West Bank and Gaza, the structures of apartheid are so deeply rooted and exemplified by the latest construction of Israel's 15-ft security wall;
3. Lastly, with 4.5 million Palestinians denied the right to return to their towns and homes of origin protected under UN resolution 194, Israel remains a Jewish settler-colonial state and a beneficiary of active ethnic cleansing.

Palestinians have always argued that UN resolution 194 provides the most important step towards a long lasting and just solution in the conflict. Palestinians recognize the importance of international law but also understand that the UN is subject to the dominance of imperialist interests and that their national liberation struggle, particularly the struggle for return, expands beyond the scope codified in resolution 194.

Audience and persuasion methods

Although this article argues for coherence of discourse, it is essential to tailor motivating arguments to different sectors. No community comes to the aid of another for purely altruistic reasons, as no empire conquers a nation to help "save" the nation's inhabitants from an injustice. Every nation and every people have a vested interest in the action they take. Our task as movement builders is to find the connecting points among all communities seeking just and fruitful lives for themselves and their children and link these values to the those proposed by the Divest-From-Israel Movement. We need to answer the questions: Why should I participate? What can I do to help?

Palestinian and Arab Core

Palestinians in exile and Arabs are the core of this movement, even if they do not lead it in a centralized manner. Palestinians have the greatest interest in their liberation, and other Arabs are stakeholders in the defeat of Zionism. For Palestinians in the US, especially for those exposed to the continuous bombardment of US-Israeli propaganda by the public media, we need to emphasize that Israel's labor party has consolidated a victory by normalizing Zionist

acceptance through peace appeal and promises of commerce. In Shimon Peres' book, the New Middle East, Yitzhak Rabin is quoted stating that Palestinians require a state so that he could maintain the character of his country and the character of his Knesset. Both Rabin and Peres were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, along with Yasser Arafat. A Jewish nation-state, established through colonizing an indigenous land is inherently racist and exclusionary. It is therefore a paradox to proclaim that such existence that promises further disenfranchisement could lead to peace in the region.

The Arab dimension of the Israeli problem is playing out in the region. Israel has had direct military activities in Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Sudan, Lebanon, Jordan, and of course Palestine. To stand against Zionism is not a simple expressions of support for a noble cause that may be remote and abstract, as the liberation of Palestine is often perceived. To stand against Zionism is to stand for all Arabs, for a future that can promise independence, development, prosperity and control over natural resources. Confronting Zionism economically and culturally is the Arab-American and Arab-European's contribution for a peaceful and just future, and it is a duty. This is especially true given the unique impact that changes in the US may have on the rest of the world.

Palestinians and Arabs need to take leading roles in this movement for divestment. Arab stores should not carry Israeli products. Those that do should be boycotted and exposed in the Arab consumer market. Those that do not carry Israeli products should proudly place a sticker announcing that they are free of Palestinian blood money, even if they were in a market not targeted by Israeli distributors. As stated earlier, many olive trees have been replanted by Israel, and olives are repackaged as Israeli exports, while Palestinian olive pickers are placed under curfew every harvest. When farmers pick their olives, they are often shot and killed.

One cannot understate how important it is to achieve maximum consensus in the Arab community in support of the divestment movement. When a young American student is arrested and beaten by the police for the support of an Arab cause, for the student's opposition to a sizeable university investment in Israel, that same student should not go to an Arab deli and be served Israeli falafel by an Arab owner. That student should in fact be supported with bail money, legal protection, recognition and physical presence at the student's political action. Any activist calling for divestment and full Palestinian repatriation is an asset for the Arab community and should be embraced, whether the activist is Arab, a US citizen, or a even a citizen of Israel.

Progressive forces and the larger White audience

Proponents of divestment must feel comfortable in arguing that Israel is an exclusionary-racist state, predicated on a chauvinistic concept argued by Zionism. In addition to what is stated under the legal argument, any exclusionary movement can be identified by the following characteristics:

1. It is built on fear of the other. Fear in this context is used to demonize an enemy population and justify violence against a defenseless people. It is used to unite a population behind a jingoistic agenda.
2. It is populist in the sense that inaccurate truisms are accepted among followers of the ideology, and those who dare to rethink these truisms must face the consequences for such actions of disloyalty. These truisms may be genocidal in character, such as Golda Meir's stating that Palestinians never existed, but could also be subtler, propagating Zionist myths of Israel's creation.
3. It is idealistic and dismissive of reality and organic historical processes. Such would be the myth of a land without a people for a people without a land. Once the Zionist movement declared Jews as a nation, they ideally require a land. Once Palestine was selected for establishing Israel, also ideally, Palestine should be without a people. Thus the people of Palestine, the reality, must track the idea and disappear.

Based on such discourse, there is a clear incentive for the US citizen to become involved as an exclusionary ideology is becoming more prominent in the US population and holds power in all three branches of US government. In fact, there is an unprecedented ideological alliance between the Christian fundamentalists leading this nation, and the Zionist forces leading the campaign of genocide against the Palestinian people.

Foreign policy is simply an extension of domestic policy. Support for a settler-colonial nation that abhors pluralism and equality, such as Israel, is an extension of a trend of intolerance right here in the US. Following this logic, one arrives to the conclusion that to fight for justice abroad, to confront empire and its violence, is to fight for a pluralistic future for US citizens. This future promises jobs, safety nets, education, and nationalized access to basics, not imprisonment and military service for the poor, and the military industrial complex for the rich.

Within this view, one should avoid the pitfalls of myopic issue pandering, as the Divestment Movement must become an ally of others and should allocate its activists to support other struggles for justice. It should seek support by human right activists, progressive churches that care about preserving the Christian heritage in Palestine, Mosques, environmentalists, women's rights and gay and lesbian rights. Similarly, the Divestment movement should demand from other progressive movements to add Divestment From Israel to their agendas, and not doing so should lead to a consequence of isolation. No force should be allowed to take the lead of a progressive sector in the peace and justice movement, if it argues for instance that ending the occupation of

Iraq is disconnected from ending support for Israel. Such positions are divisive and treat struggles for the universality of justice as isolated commodities.

Immigrants, African Americans and Latinos

Many immigrants emerged from a legacy of post colonialism and are proud bearers of a revolutionary history. Similarly, African-Americans and Latinos stand on the shoulders of those who fell in the civil right movement and the struggles of farm workers. These movements are all connected as they emerged during a forward moving era of democratic-national and national liberation struggles, as characterized by the liberation of Algeria, India, Vietnam, Zimbabwe, Bolivia, Cuba and many others.

Within this context, the trend the US is advocating, a return to the colonial era, is very dangerous to their futures. The colonial era carries with it racist discourse that places people of European heritage as paternal guardians over their subjects. Such previously antiquated and abandoned discourse is exemplified by George Bush's classification of a war between the civilized and uncivilized. It also reasserts the assumption that colonial subjects could not rule themselves, thus requiring an occupier to manage their affairs and usurp the resources of the colonies.

From its inception, the Zionist movement recognized that the land it must acquire must be slated for colonization. Theodore Herzl was quoted in Arthur Hertzberg's *The Zionist Idea*, arguing in 1905:

"To go further than any colonialist has gone in Africa... where involuntary expropriation of land will temporarily alienate civilized opinion. By the time the reshaping of world opinion in our favor has been completed, we shall be firmly established in our country, no longer fearing the influx of foreigners, and receiving our visitors with aristocratic benevolence."

Such is the logic of the colonizer, to go further than others have gone but twist the logic so that the colonizers, the Israeli settlers, appear as the victims of the colonized. It is widely propagated in the US, that Israel the only apartheid settler-colonial nuclear power, is the only democracy in the Middle East that is subject to immediate extermination by its anti-Semitic neighbors. Some claimed that Palestinians repeatedly rejected generous offers given by Israelis and others claimed that Palestinians never had a national identity prior to 1948. No one could clearly articulate the twisted logic of a pillaging oppressor more than Frantz Fanon:

"Colonialism is not satisfied by imposing its authority on the nation's present and future. It does not accept the mere control of the land's population, by depleting the indigenous mind of form and

content. It has to go further by introducing a skewed logic, focusing on the suppressed people's history in order to mischaracterize it, disfigure it and ultimately destroy it."

As Archbishop Desmond Tutu, a South African veteran of the anti apartheid struggle said in 1989:

" I am a black South African, and if I were to change the names, a description of what is happening in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank could describe events in South Africa"

In this context, proponents of divestment ought to avoid dangerous allegations by people who may not be familiar with US politics, claiming that Jews control US politics, etc... Such allegations are carefully inserted into the mix, either by anti Semites who stand to gain in lumping all Jews with political Zionism or by Zionist proponents who try to discredit this movement as anti Semitic. Israel must be seen, as the evidence clearly illustrates, that it is a colonial state with all the characteristics described above.

Jewish Community

In addressing the Jewish community, this movement must first treat this audience like any other audience, regardless of the historic experience and the institutional support that Jewish Americans lend to Israel. The Jewish community is not the World Zionist Organization, nor is it the Jewish Agency, even though Israel claims to speak on behalf of all Jews, especially those living in the US. Jews do not have a greater burden to carry in confronting Israel than any other community. In fact, to argue that the international Jewish community is responsible for Israel's action, is to further the Zionist argument that Jews are a nation that acts as one with Israel being at its center of conscience.

The Jewish community, however, can play a crucial role in furthering the Divestment From Israel campaigns as it speaks to an audience who may sometimes be conditioned that the political connection with the Zionist state is a religious one. Many Jewish holidays for instance require goods that are often sold by Israeli corporations. Education on this issue is required by conscious Jewish activists to encourage the purchase of alternative products, and make that a publicized point.

Most importantly, Jewish involvement in this campaign disarms the Zionist forces in labeling the targeting of Israel as anti Semitic. In fact, it has been shown, by leading historians such as Hanna Arendt, in her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, that Zionists and Nazis shared one common

goal, and often collaborated. They both argued for separation of gentile from Jew. Lenni Brenner also documented Yitzhak Shamir's training by the Italian Fascists of early Zionist forces. Such convergence of exclusionary ideologies is also witnessed today with the latest marriage of Bush's fundamentalism with Zionism, although Christian Zionists want the return of the Kingdom of David as a step towards an anti-Jewish dream, the eradication of all Jews.

After a century of alliances and support by European anti Jewish tendencies, it can be argued that the Zionist movement, and especially after Israel's creation, has furthered anti Semitism. Speaking on behalf of all the world's Jewry while committing horrible atrocities against indigenous Palestinians and Arabs contributes further to the spread of anti-Jewish ideologies.

The Jewish community may become motivated in seeking its self-representation without Israeli dominance over the Jewish identity. There is a campaign for instance to renounce *Aliyah*, the ascension to Israel, and couple that with Divestment to support Palestinian repatriation. The Divestment Movement should publicize these efforts in the Jewish community whenever possible. In short, this movement needs to clearly illustrate the anti Semitic dimension of Israel to the Jewish community and call on Jewish activists to carry the campaign of divestment into their homes and communities for the reasons described.

Methodology

The purpose of this section is to provide a quick reference on how to build a movement for divestment and boycott. By no means is this a complete guide, but it is a starting point that is built on previously successful models. It depends heavily on the activists' abilities to build coalitions and assert a persuasive and well-corroborated argument on why Divestment from Israel is a step towards Palestinian freedom and global justice. Since the movement towards ending aid to Israel is a strategic demand only carried forward at the political level, it is out of the scope of this discussion.

Divestiture

Step 1: Identify your institution.

If you are a student or a faculty member, then you work and dwell daily on a university campus. If you are not, you could be connected to Israel financially in more ways than you think. The following are a brief list of institutions which typically hold investments in and relations with Israel:

- University endowments or public investments
- Retirement accounts and pension funds
- Mutual funds carried by 401 (k) and other investments, including venture funds
- Municipalities and city governments encouraging trade with Israel
- Labor unions
- Religious institutions, including churches, mosques and synagogues

Step 2: Do your research and identify your targets.

Every public university must have a public record documenting all financial holding in corporations and government bonds. For private universities, the research is less straightforward, but the information is available indirectly through press releases and cross-referencing of investment and securities brokers. Investment funds, on the other hand, must report on a quarterly basis where the money is invested and track the performance of that investment through a prospectus. As for labor unions and local governments, one must track exchanges carried out by that institution and be aware of when such exchanges entail Israeli institutions and personalities. Finally, there are multiple institutions that can carry resolutions to divest from Israel for the sake of political and cultural isolation.

At this point, it is important to separate individual from collective action. The individual can choose to make different choices and use this document as a guide. The movement's strength, however, lies in collective action and grassroots organizing. Not all institutions are responsive and some are extremely protective of their records. It is not uncommon for a student movement to sue their public university under Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), or contributors to a large non-profit to obtain those records.

When the records are collected, one usually retrieves a table of cumulative holdings and the monetary value of each holding. Each public corporation is usually listed under a US stock exchange, a foreign stock exchange, or both. Prior to the availability of this information over the Internet, one used to consult Israel's Standard and Poor's (S&P), or NYSE subsidiary directories to determine a corporate family tree. This is relevant because not all information is readily available over the Internet. Nevertheless, an efficient place to start is a website, such as www.hoovers.com but there are many others.

Once you enter Hoover's, type the company name and click search. The database returns different information that is usually US-related. To determine if the company is Israeli, click on financials. As an example, try "Check Point Software," a corporation established to provide security services.

Each institution must pursue its priorities based on what is feasible and its own political realities. It is not advisable to go after General Electric's 2-billion dollar investment for instance, if you have 30 million dollars in Israeli corporations and 5 million in government bonds. The movement has to determine the most feasible path to reducing or eliminating Israel's benefit and its ability to continue repressing the Palestinian indigenous people. From the movement's perspective, passing resolutions that can achieve 35 million dollars in divestiture without compromising on discourse is far better than asking for 2 billion and ultimately maintaining both investments.

Step 3: Build the movement

Now that you have the information, start building a wide coalition in support of Palestinian rights by establishing links with other peace and justice struggles as previously described in the political section of this article. As a primary and central focus, bring about public education and call on speakers who carry the indigenous narrative to testify on Israel's atrocities against the Palestinian people. You should link US aid to Israel with other US policies leading to injustice elsewhere, such as Iraq, Columbia or the Philippines, to expand your audience by holding joint events, symposia and conferences. Educate on why it is necessary to integrate the Palestinian cause in other justice-oriented movements. Build a case on why political Zionism that called on establishing a Jewish State by displacing Palestinians resulted in an exclusionary-racist global movement with a genocidal state as its primary manifestation.

Zionist forces will battle your discourse. In each public event, on each table, call on your supporters to join your group, sign your email list, and most importantly sign a petition that calls on your institution to divest its holdings from the State of Israel. The petition should be worded as if it were a resolution that would ultimately be adopted by your legislative body. The petition should not carry any investment details as these targets will become variable and by the time you present the petition, Israeli stocks are sold and bought in different corporations.

Step 4: Take action

Once a significant number of names are collected, say 500 – 1000 in a 20,000-person institution, go public with your intentions. By going public, in a press conference for instance, you alert your constituency of your intention and expand your support beyond the canvassing approach. Print the names and present them to the executive body of your institution demanding divestment as a democratic representation of the institutional body. The University of California, Berkeley students held multiple events demonstrating to the student body how Israel treats the Palestinian people at checkpoints. Such events proliferate support and quickly build up a force behind a resolution.

Different universities, churches, and unions calling for divestment from Israel have passed multiple resolutions. It is important to maintain the political demands of the movement as listed above so that coherence is not lost. In every public event, protest, sit-in, call on the community to come and support your action. Diversity of constituents leads to a spillover effect in other institutions as well as a strengthening of your movement by raising its morale and most importantly, its budget.

Boycott

The boycott movement can be acted upon individually or institutionally. At the institutional level, one can approach progressive outfits such as fair-trade cooperatives and ask the institution to vote within their body to de-shelve Israeli products. Point out the double standards in the values of institutions that promote indigenous rights, environmentalism and fair trade if they continue to sell Israeli products.

Similar to divestment, research the products sold. Establish contacts with workers on the inside and build a boycott movement. Then go to the executive body with a specific demand calling on that cooperative to enhance the movement for global justice by taking a stand against apartheid.

Also similar to divestment, the boycott movement should prioritize its targets. Walmart, a \$320 billion dollar institution will not respond as favorably as a local grocer or cooperative. Most importantly, Arab grocers should be catalogued in areas that have a large Arab community. Those who sell Israeli products should be alerted and listed as sellers of the product. Those who de-shelve or do not carry the product should be encouraged with a sticker or a decal presented to them as a gift. The movement to encourage the flow of business to these stores, through free publicity, recognition at political and other public events, should use such markings. In some places, a sticker of Handala or the Olive Tree was used to mark Israeli-free products.

Conclusion

Every movement is born out of its historical necessity. The movement for justice in Palestine is no different. Movements for justice in El Salvador, Chile, Nicaragua, Namibia and South Africa were no different and were occasionally repressed by corporate and governmental bodies benefiting from the suffering of those afflicted by the injustices. Although US policies played a critical role in bringing about the injustice and in maintaining it, these movements eventually prevailed. Today, the movement for justice in Palestine has to confront one added adversary, individuals who are led to the wrongful conclusion that their religious persuasion is a motive for them to support Zionist apartheid. Our movement has to separate the individual who carries a doctrine of racism, from the institution who is prosecuting a campaign of genocide, by creating room for that individual in the divestment movement through debate, education and engagement. Persuasion of individual Zionists should not come at the expense of moving forward with the urgent need to address the grave injustice that the US-Israeli alliance is bringing to the Arab World.

In this article we presented a five-year follow up on the Divest-From-Israel movement launched in November 2000. The objective was to present a coherent political approach and suggest a flow chart for taking solidarity from the realm of political discourse and sloganeering to the realm of the material. Although political action is always a necessity, material action is the intended outcome of this movement. Similar to the Divest-From-South-Africa movement, we expect a long struggle ahead of us and anticipate a 20-year run. The first five years have been surprisingly successful and prolific in outcome and education. What is important, however, is maintaining a trend of tangible successes that would eventually accumulate into a total victory.