Israeli Activists Challenge Israel's Anti-Boycott Legislation

Reporting by Peace Fellow Nikki Hodgson

Photo by Nikki Hodgson

Israel: In a recent statement, Israeli activists, including members of the Alternative Information Center (AIC), a joint Palestinian-Israeli activist organization, took a strong stance against the newly passed Israeli legislation which prohibits individuals from supporting or participating in boycotts targeting the Israeli occupation. AIC is a partner of The Advocacy Project.

The law specifically prohibits "an initiation of a boycott against the State of Israel; encouragement of participation in such a boycott; supply of information with the purpose of advancing such a boycott; and provision of assistance with the purpose of advancing such a boycott." The law also states that the court is permitted to award damages to the entity being boycotted without proof of damages. Punishments include an array of financial penalties such as fines and ineligibility for state funding or tax breaks.

In response to passage of this legislation, a number of Israeli citizens, including several AIC staff members, have signed the following statement:

**We Will Not be Silent: Statement in Regard to Israeli Anti-Boycott Law**

Wednesday, 13 July 2011 07:45 Multiple Signatories

"We're going to arrest you, but it's difficult with you because all you do is talk."
- Israeli soldier to Palestinian organizer Mohammad Othman, 2009 [1]

[1] Link to source if available
We, Israeli citizens, members of Boycott![2], hereby reiterate our support and promotion of the Palestinian Call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel, until it complies with international law and universal principles of human rights[3]. We declare this in spite of the new legislation by the Israeli Knesset, which aims to penalize our and our partners' activities, curbing freedom of speech and political organizing and most importantly - banning Israeli citizens from acting according to their conscience when it conflicts with the deplorable policies of the state.

The anti-BDS law is not the first attempt at silencing the BDS campaign. Throughout the years, Israel has detained Palestinian leaders, activists, speakers and organizers under administrative detention and without charges, or at times under various draconian charges such as 'incitement' and the organizing of 'illegal demonstrations'. On September 22nd 2009, Mohammad Othman, 34, was detained at the Allenby Crossing upon his return to the occupied West Bank following a meeting with Norwegian finance minister Halvorsen. Earlier that month, minister Halvorsen had announced Norway's divestment from the Israeli company Elbit due to "ethical concerns"[4]. Othman was arrested and held without charges or trial, under an unlawful administrative detention order and had spent much of the 113 days in detention under solitary confinement. Imprisonment of political activists is an almost routine practice against Palestinian human rights defenders.

Like such repressive practices, the newly approved Israeli law, which specifies fines and the payment of 'compensation' by Israeli citizens or residents, who initiate or encourage a boycott of Israel - is also bound to fail. We hereby support and promote the recent Palestinian call for an immediate and comprehensive military embargo on Israel[5] due to its consistent resort to violence and deadly attacks on Palestinians and Arab civilians; we stand with Jewish Voice for Peace in their campaign to bring TIAA-CREF to divest from the Israeli occupation[6]; and, we support and encourage all other BDS-related divestment campaigns, such as the campaign to Derail Israel's Unlawful A1 Train Project[7].

Lastly, we urge artists scheduled to perform in Israel to send a clear message that the Israeli occupation, the institutionalized discrimination of Israel's own Palestinian citizens and Israel's denial of the right of return and compensation of the Palestinian refugees - are neither okay nor normal, as Maxi Jazz from Faithless once put it[8]. Roxette, Ziggy Marley, Dream Theater, George Benson, Nino Katamadze, Paul Simon and John Cale - we may risk persecution for saying this - heed the Palestinian call for BDS and cancel your shows in Israel!

Signed,

Yonah Adelman    Nir Harel   Alison Ramer
Uri Agnon        Lihi Joffe  Renen Raz
Daniel Atai      Yonatan Kahn Maya Rotem
Oshra Bar         Yael Kahn   Leehee Rothschild
Yoav Bar  Liad Kantorowicz  Aia Safadi
Ronnie Barkan  Amani Khalefa  Lizi Sagie
Elisha Baskin  Assaf Kintzer  Emily Schaeffer
Roi Basha  Yana Knopova (Ziferblat)  Ayala Shani
Ofra Ben Artzi  Abir Kopty  Tal Shapira
Eitan Bronstein  Micha Kurtz  Yonatan Shapira
Alona Cohen  Noam Lekach  Yuval Shtrool
Alex Cohn  Roi Livne  Stavit Sinai
Silan Dallal  Gal Lugassi  Kobi Snitz
Yossi David  Emelia Marcovich  Sonya Soloviov
Eran Efrati  Anat Matar  Jonatan Stanczak
Hamutal Erato  Haggai Matar  Tirtza Tauber
Naama Farjoun  Eilat Maoz  Eran Torbiner
Tamar Freed  Edo Medicks  Tamara Traubmann
Amir Gafner  Dorothy Naor  Sahar Vardi
Amaya Galili  Irene Nasser  Itamar Weitzman
Elyakim Genazzani  Ofer Neiman  Maya Wind
Angela Godfree-Goldstein  David Nir  Sergio Yahni
Rebekah Gomez  Noa Olchovsky  Oren Yermiah
Ohal Grietzer  Jonathan Pollak  Michal Zak
Shir Hever  Leiser Peles  Amal Ziada
Connie Hackbarth  Yaar Peretz  Adi Zlotogora

On behalf of

Boycott! Supporting the Palestinian BDS Call from Within
http://boycottisrael.info

[2] Our full name is: "Boycott! Supporting the Palestinian BDS Call from Within". Aka: "Boycott from Within".

• Learn more about AP's Partner the Alternative Information Center.
• Read Peace Fellow Nikki Hodgson's blogs.
• See Nikki's photos from the field.