

LA Jews for Peace

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Assemblyman Richard Bloom
2800 28 St
Santa Monica, CA 90405

Thank you for taking the time last Friday to meet with our delegation from LA Jews for Peace.

We support the existence of the State of Israel, and we fully understand and share your concern about Jewish/Israeli survival. However, we find the allegations that BDS is dedicated to the destruction of Israel to be exaggerated.

From our perspective, the greatest threat to Israel's existence is not the return of Palestinian refugees or BDS, but endless conflict with Palestinians resulting from the elimination of the two-state solution through expanding West Bank Jewish-only colonization (that is, the settlements), and the double-standard of Israeli laws (one version for Jews and a different version for Palestinians) in Israel and in the occupied territories.

That is the conclusion of many Israeli officials, including the six former directors of the Shin Bet interviewed for the Oscar nominated Israeli documentary, *The Gatekeepers*. Former Israeli Prime Ministers Ehud Barak and Ehud Olmert went further and repeatedly said the greatest threat to Israel's existence is the continued settlement expansion that is leading to the construction of an apartheid state in Israel's post-1967 borders.

We are trying to save the State of Israel by making it more democratic and ceasing its rule over another people. Otherwise Israel will continue to be increasingly isolated among the community of nations.

This is the understanding of American officials like President Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry who support Israel's existence yet believe that the continued settlement enterprise undermines Israel's future.

And it is this understanding that drives European semi-governmental institutions to support the existence of Israel yet boycott and divest from institutions that support settlement expansion. An example is the Netherlands' largest pension fund that

announced it will withdraw all its investments with Israel's five largest banks because they have branches in the West Bank and/or are involved in financing construction in the settlements (<http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.567548>).

A desire to support Israel, yet fight the human right abuses inherent in the occupation, is what drives the Presbyterian, United Methodist, and other churches to divest from companies that support and profit from the settlements

(<https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/icujp/pages/59/attachments/original/1406063804/PresbyterianDivestment.pdf?1406063804> and

https://www.kairosresponse.org/oppos_to_settlements_resol.html). Human rights abuses are documented by B'Tselem and other Israeli organizations.

Jews and others across the world boycott products originating in the occupied territories, and companies that support from and/or profit from the occupation. They do not seek to destroy Israel. Boycott and divestment are techniques used by ordinary citizens seeking to bring equality and human rights to Israel and the Palestinian territories. They are non-violent ways of demanding that all human beings are treated equally and fairly, and to eliminate the double-standard that now exists in Israeli law within both Israel and the occupied territories.

BDS is a loose and uncoordinated world-wide movement of people of conscience that seeks to reverse Israel's incremental construction of apartheid. Although some people who engage in BDS do not accept the existence of Israel, that is not true for most people who use BDS to correct injustice.

Based on your question about the Jewish right of return, we understand that you are concerned that the BDS call for a Palestinian right of return will undermine the Jewish right of return. That might be a worry, but Palestinian leadership (Yasser Arafat and Mahmoud Abbas), the Arab Peace Initiative, and the international consensus all stipulate that the refugee situation must be resolved through an agreed solution.

No less than the International Crisis Group has offered a detailed proposal to resolve the continued plight of Palestinian refugees and their descendants through a two state solution. In their detailed proposal, the refugee crisis could be resolved in the context of a two state solution through land swaps, encouraging the return of many refugees to the future Palestinian state alongside Israel, and compensation for those who go elsewhere. (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Israel%20Palestine/156-bringing-back-the-palestinian-refugee-question.pdf>)

Based on these reasons, we oppose AB-2844 because it impedes, rather than supports, the concerted, but so far ineffective efforts by the international community, the US government, and progressive Israeli and Palestinian groups to establish a two-state

solution in lieu of the widespread discrimination and the incremental construction of an apartheid state that is the Israeli status quo.

Let us return Israel to democratic norms for all its people as enunciated in its Declaration of Independence (that celebrates its 78th anniversary this month), and let the Palestinian people go into their own state free of domination.

Thank you again for the opportunity to exchange views about the Israeli-Palestinian situation in general and AB-2844 in particular.

Sincerely,

Eric Gordon

Yossi Khen

Lillian Laskin

Tony Litwinko

Richard Platkin

Jeff Warner