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DIVESTING FROM ISRAEL: A HANDBOOK

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LOOK

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Global Exchange is an international human rights organization dedicated to promoting environmental, political and social justice. Since our founding in 1988, we have increased the U.S. public’s global awareness while building partnerships among peoples around the world.

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To order copies of this How-To Guide, e-mail palestine@globalexchange.org or call 800-497-1994 ext 251



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DIVESTMENT FROM ISRAEL

The divest-from-Israel movement is gaining unprecedented momentum both in the United States and around the world. On April 17, 2003, the Student Council at Wayne State University in Michigan voted to divest from all companies doing business in Israel. Divestment campaigns are also well underway at other university campuses across the country, and the movement is slowly spreading to the general public as well. Universities are a powerful force for divestment, with their large endowments and investment portfolios, but there are many other institutions you can target in your campaign. This booklet will help you identify your target institution and begin researching its holdings, define your campaign goals, create a petition, enlist support through media outreach and educational events, pass a divestment resolution, and connect with the global divestment movement. There are also a number of educational materials for you to print and use as you educate potential supporters. Check out Global Exchange's Palestine Program web site at www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/palestine for more resources. Keep us posted on your efforts and let us know how we can help!

ISRAELI APARTHEID: THE SOUTH AFRICAN COMPARISON

On August 31, 2001, in what may have been the largest protest in South Africa since the fall of apartheid, 30,000 to 50,000 South Africans took to the streets of Durban to speak out in support of the Palestinian people. The event was organized by SANGOCO (South African NGO Coalition), the PSC (Palestine Solidarity Committee), the Durban Social Forum, and a number of other grassroots groups. It was timed to coincide with the United Nations' World Conference on Racism, but the demonstration was not only joined by delegates but also thousands of South Africans: activists, trade unionists, students, and others. Their message was clear: "Zionism = Racism."

The protest caused an international controversy as Israel, the United States, and other Israeli allies condemned the demonstrators and withdrew their delegates. Israel defended its policies toward the Palestinians as politically, not racially, motivated. The South Africans failed to see the distinction, and many of the speakers at the conference's opening ceremonies voiced their support for discussing the Palestine issue, including the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson.¹

The South Africans' experience with apartheid makes them sensitive to the Palestinian plight. They recognize the same patterns in the South African and Palestinian experience: limited or no citizenship rights, segregation, arbitrary detentions, collective punishment, and other injustices based on race, nationality, ethnicity, or religion.

There are two different groups of Palestinians living under Israeli apartheid: Palestinians who are citizens of Israel and Palestinians living under Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Palestinians living under occupation do not have citizenship in any country nor do they have voting rights in Israel, but they are subject to the laws and policies of the Israeli

government and its military. Since the occupation began in 1967, Israel has been constructing "colonies" for Jewish Israelis throughout the West Bank and Gaza, and the pace of construction doubled in the 1990s. There are now 205 Israeli "settlements" and 74 "outposts" in the territories; 15 new settlements have been approved since March 2001.² These colonies are completely off-limits to Palestinians. There is an entire network of high-quality roads that connect the various settlements, which Palestinians are also banned from using. These roads isolate Palestinian communities from each other and, along with the time-consuming and humiliating checkpoint system, make traveling even short distances a grueling process.

These colonies, bypass roads, and checkpoints have effectively created an Israeli version of the South African Bantustans. Under apartheid in South Africa, the white government created so-called "homelands" for black South Africans. The whites revoked blacks' citizenship and relegated them to isolated, undesirable areas of the country, claiming to have given them independence. In reality, they stripped black Africans of their rights and resources, and the homelands were economically, militarily, and politically dependent on white South Africa. Israel has done something similar in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Palestinian Authority is given official recognition as the representative of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories, but it has very little real power. The Israeli military invades the area at will, disregarding the authority of the PA police force, and top PA leaders have been threatened with assassination and held under house arrest. The occupied territories are under Israel's economic and military stranglehold; Palestinians can't work, go to school, or even leave their home without Israeli permission. At the same time, they are confined to shrinking pieces of land as Israel seizes the most desirable

locations and builds Jewish settlements that surround Palestinian cities and towns. Although the idea of a truly independent state was likely never any more realistic than an independent Bantustan in South Africa, it is now a near impossibility.

The isolation of the Palestinians in the occupied territories will be almost complete in June 2003 when Israel finishes the first phase of its “apartheid wall” along the Green Line (Israel’s de facto border with the West Bank). The wall, re-enforced with trenches, electric fences, and security patrols, will be 72 miles (116 kilometers) long in the first phase and will eventually run the entire 217-mile (350-kilometer) length of the West Bank. The construction of the wall has destroyed numerous Palestinian homes, expropriated land in the occupied territories, and separated Palestinians from their farmland. The district of Qalqilya in the northern West Bank, for example, will be completely encircled by the wall, with only one guarded entrance and exit.³ Although Israel claims it is building the wall to secure its own borders, the wall will literally imprison hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in the West Bank, creating a physical manifestation of Israel’s apartheid.

Life in a Jewish colony in the West Bank or Gaza Strip is vastly different from life in a Palestinian town. The colonies expropriate a large amount of water, filling family swimming pools while Palestinians struggle to get drinking water, take showers, and water their crops. Each Israeli in Israel consumes as much water as do four Palestinians in the territories; each Israeli settler in the occupied territories uses as much water as do seventeen Palestinians.⁴ Thirty percent of the Israeli colonists living in the territories also own a home in Israel, and nearly all of them have an income significantly higher than that of the average Israeli, although their tax burden is significantly lower because of government grants and tax breaks.⁵ The disparity in living standards between the Israeli occupiers and the Palestinians living under the occupation is inexcusable and dangerous. Palestinians are justifiably resentful as they watch luxurious settlements spring up around them, funded by the Israeli government, while their homes are bulldozed because Israel refused to issue them the required building permits.

Palestinians within Israel constitute 18% of the population (1,057,800 out of a total population of 5,757,900). Although these Palestinians have Israeli citizenship, the government only guarantees equal rights for citizens (and noncitizens) with “Jewish nationality.” In fact, all people with this “Jewish nationality” can automatically become citizens, even if they have never stepped foot in Israel. On the other hand, Israel’s stated policy is to never grant citizenship to non-Jews who wish to immigrate to Israel, automatically banning all of the Palestinians who fled or were forced off their land during the establishment of Israel but desperately want to return to the land they lived on for generations.

Palestinian neighborhoods receive less than one fifth of the budgeted municipal services that their Jewish counterparts receive. In many cases, especially in Bedouin communities, Israel simply refuses to recognize the existence of the Arab communities. Because the government denies the legality of these villages, it refuses to issue permits to build or repair homes and does not provide electricity, water, health services, education, roads, or any other infrastructure. The results of this policy are embarrassing for such a highly developed country: in the Negev, for example, 70% of Bedouin infants are not fully immunized and one third must be hospitalized within their first year of life.

Palestinian-Israelis have little recourse within the “democratic” system to challenge the blatant, institutionalized discrimination against them. They have little voice in the Knesset (the Israeli parliament) or in other branches of the government. Socially, Palestinian-Israelis are shunned by the Jewish majority, sent to separate schools, and discriminated against in both admissions to universities and in employment. Jewish Israelis have made it clear that non-Jewish citizens are unwanted and have no place (beyond performing menial labor) within Israeli society. This position is no more defensible than that of the segregationist American south before the civil rights movement, the apartheid government of South Africa, or any other racist regime.

Although it is tragic to see apartheid once again rear its ugly head, the South African experience can give us hope. It shows us that peaceful, international, grassroots activism can work. It shows us that a people can move beyond hate, violence, and retribution to reach for peace, healing, and coexistence. This process is not easy, but it is not impossible. It is time for all of us to reject the idea that separate is ever equal. It is time for us to tell the Israelis that they must share their state with the people who were there when they arrived. It is time to end apartheid, once and for all.

¹ “WCAR Daily Report, Aug. 29, 2001,” Human Rights Internet NGO Forum, <http://www.hri.ca/racism/dailyupdates/aug29.shtml>, (5 Feb. 2003)

² “Fact Sheet: Israeli Settlements on Occupied Palestinian Territories,” The Palestine Monitor: The Voice of Civil Society, <http://www.palestine-monitor.org/factsheet/settlement.html>, (5 Feb. 2003)

³ “11,000 Palestinians Between Israel’s Apartheid Wall and Green Line,” LAW- The Palestinian Society for the Protection of Human Rights & the Environment, <http://www.lawsociety.org/Press/Preleases/2002/sep/sep25.html>, (5 Feb. 2003)

⁴ “Fact Sheet: Israeli Settlements on Occupied Palestinian Territories,” The Palestine Monitor: The Voice of Civil Society, <http://www.palestine-monitor.org/factsheet/settlement.html>, (5 Feb. 2003)

⁵ “Fact Sheet: Israeli Settlement Policy,” Palestine Solidarity Campaign, <http://www.palestinecampaign.org/resources.asp?#factsheets>, (5 Feb. 2003) Flights to Tehran should cost between \$1,000–\$1,500 (but can be more, depending on availability). I can recommend a couple of agencies:

DIVESTMENT AND BOYCOTT: PEACEFUL WAYS THAT YOU CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

For the past several decades, the Israeli government has continuously violated United Nations resolutions and international humanitarian law. In the creation of Israel in 1948, 75% percent of the Palestinians were dispossessed of their land and sent into exile. Then in 1967, Israel illegally occupied Palestinian territories in the West Bank and Gaza, creating a new wave of refugees. Palestinians who remained in Israel live as third class citizens, facing legal, economic, and social discrimination. In the occupied territories, Israel continues to subject the Palestinians there to home demolitions, closures and checkpoints, extrajudicial detentions and assassinations, immobilizing curfews, and countless other daily abuses and forms of oppression. The system of apartheid that Israel has developed closely resembles that which South Africa once had. Apartheid in South Africa was eventually abolished in large part because of an international grassroots movement to stop financial support of the apartheid regime. Through divestment (stopping capital investment in companies that do business in Israel) and boycott (not buying Israeli products) we can bring justice to the Israelis and Palestinians as well. The following questions can help you as you decide to join this growing movement:

What are the goals of this divestment/boycott campaign?

- The divestment/boycott campaign seeks to build a peaceful, international, grassroots movement that will pressure companies to withdraw their investments from Israel. This withdrawal, along with a consumer boycott of Israeli products, will eventually isolate Israel economically and diplomatically, pressuring Israel to live up to its obligations under international law.
- The campaign will help dismantle Israel's apartheid system under which Palestinians live and end the construction of "colonies" in the occupied Palestinian territories. Furthermore, it will pressure the U.S. government to transform its Middle East policy from one that is biased and destructive to one that seeks genuine justice and peace for both the Israeli and Palestinian people.
- The campaign will hopefully help Israeli citizens themselves realize that maintaining the occupation and racial discrimination against Palestinians is morally abhorrent and an economic drain on Israel.
- The campaign will end when Palestinians are finally allowed the rights of freedom and self-determination, when Palestinians inside Israel are given equal civil rights, when there is a just solution for the 5 million Palestinian refugees who wish to return home, and when there is equality, peace and security for all people of the region.

Can divestment from Israel be called anti-Semitic?

Absolutely not.

Anti-Semitism goes against the very principles that are the foundation of this movement: justice, equality, human rights, and peace for ALL peoples. It is important to separate Israeli policies from the Jewish people, many of whom support divestment. Divestment and boycott campaigns target Israeli, not Jewish, products. The campaign also targets American-owned companies that do business in Israel and fund the occupation, but it is not anti-American. Charges of anti-

Semitism are poor attempts to distract from the real problem: Israel's apartheid.

Why are we singling out Israel? What about all of the other countries that abuse human rights?

As Americans we have a unique responsibility to hold Israel accountable for its human rights abuses because of the billions of dollars in military and financial aid Israel receives from us each year. In fact, Israel is the single largest U.S. foreign aid recipient, despite having the fourth largest military and the 17th largest economy in the world. Should we have refrained from challenging apartheid South Africa because there were abuses throughout the world? Of course not! There are many compelling similarities between Israel and apartheid-era South Africa. Here are just a few:

- In apartheid-era South Africa, only whites had full rights. In Israel, Palestinian citizens may vote and run for election, but only Jews have full rights to obtain land, receive military veteran benefits, and immigrate under "the Law of Return." Palestinians in the occupied territories are subject to Israeli rule without any democratic voting rights even though they pay Israeli taxes.
- White South African rulers during apartheid wanted a strong white South Africa with few or no black citizens. To achieve this goal, they transferred black South Africans to "Bantustans," which were nominally autonomous, but weak, black "homelands," with the intent of isolating them from the rest of the country. Similarly, Israel is building Jewish-only settlements or "colonies" across the Palestinian territories, cutting off access between cities with checkpoints and Jewish-only roads. Israel is now building a massive cement wall three times as long and twice as high as the Berlin wall that will completely encircle some areas of the West Bank. The wall is destroying the most fertile lands in the West Bank or annexing them into Israel. This is a physical manifestation of Israel's apartheid policies.

Aren't both the Israelis and Palestinians committing violence?

While both sides have been violent towards each other, there are key distinctions between the two sides that the mainstream media and pro-Israel voices tend to disregard.

- First, Israel is the occupier and aggressor in this conflict, and it has inflicted tremendous pain and desperation upon the Palestinian people. There is no moral symmetry between the violence that the occupier (Israel) commits and the violence that the oppressed (the Palestinians) commit. Palestinian acts of violence must be judged in the context of Israel's decades of aggression, dispossession, and oppression of the entire Palestinian people. There is no justification for the killing of innocent Palestinians or Israelis, however Palestinians are resisting a violent occupation by a superior military power. We must remember that the black African National Congress (ANC) also used violence in its struggle against the white government. This recognition does not excuse violence, but its use by some Palestinians cannot invalidate the right to freedom and self-determination for all Palestinians, and it does not justify Israel's brutal occupation and use of collective punishment against the Palestinians.
- Second, there is an incredible power difference between Israel and the Palestinians that clearly shows this is not a conflict between two equal parties. Israel is the "superpower" in this conflict. Israel's highly advanced and well-trained military, funded primarily by US taxpayers, is the fourth strongest on the planet. Israel is a recognized state with one of the most developed economies in the world, and still receives billions of dollars in aid annually from the United States. Palestinians, on the other hand, have no recognized state (they are stateless), no military or advanced weaponry, a weak economy dependent on Israel, and soaring unemployment. Palestinians live under Israeli rule, which restricts their travel and often confines them to their homes. Israel has at least twenty laws that apply differently to Palestinians. Even in sheer numbers, the Palestinian death toll far exceeds the Israeli death toll. As an occupying power, Israel has a responsibility to follow international law, particularly the 4th Geneva Convention, and provide for the civilians under its rule. Israel has clearly failed in that duty, and thus the international community must bring justice to the Palestinians.

Is the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip necessary to maintain Israeli security?

No. If Israel were truly occupying these areas to provide security for Israel proper, it would not be allowing and encouraging civilians settlers to move into the region. Throughout the 1990s, Israel continued to construct permanent "colonies" in the Palestinian territories (even though the Oslo agreements between

the two parties forbid it). Israeli civilians have been encouraged to move to these settlements through tax incentives and bargain real estate deals. These Israeli "colonists" actually create more of a security risk; many are considered right-wing fanatics by most of their countrymen, and they aggravate the conflict by carrying machine guns, uprooting Palestinian orchards, and harassing Palestinian in their neighborhoods and markets. The Palestinians are denied access to the colonists' communities, which expropriate large quantities of Palestinian land and water, and are forbidden from using the bypass roads that now crisscross the territories. These colonies and the roads that connect them form the basis for Israel's apartheid state. Palestinians are confined to smaller and increasingly isolated areas, similar to the black "homelands" in South Africa under apartheid. The hopelessness and resentment that Israel has created through this colonization policy continue to create a greater security risk for Israel.

What impact will a boycott really have?

Although the true economic impact of a boycott is unknown, its value in raising awareness of Israel's occupation is tremendous. When we exercise our economic power and take a moral stance as individuals and as a community to speak out against oppression, we get the attention of world leaders. We must support businesses that are guided by strong ethical principles, not simply profit.

How does investing in Israel relate to the policies of occupation and apartheid?

Some investments have very direct links to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and the oppression of the Palestinian people. United Technologies, for example, sells Blackhawk helicopters to Israel, which Israel then uses to attack Palestinian civilians in the occupied territories. Caterpillar is another company that contributes directly to the Israel's brutal military rule. Caterpillar bulldozers are routinely used to demolish Palestinian homes, often killing inhabitants inside. A young American peace activist was recently murdered by an Israeli soldier when she was run over by a Caterpillar bulldozer. Other connections are less apparent but crucial nonetheless. Hewlett Packard, for example, owns part of the Technion Institute in Israel, a prestigious college that also develops high-tech weaponry for the Israeli military. Israel Bonds are another form of investment that support Israel's apartheid. Revenues from government bond sales go directly into Israel's treasury. Bond money is used for infrastructure improvement projects, including illegal construction in the Palestinian territories. It is also used to resettle Jewish immigrants who are welcomed into Israel while Palestinian refugees are denied the right to ever return home. Even seemingly innocuous investments in Israel are actually funding the violation of fundamental Palestinian human rights.

START YOUR OWN DIVESTMENT CAMPAIGN

Step 1: Do Your Research –

Identify Your Targets

By now, you are convinced that boycotting and divesting from Israel is the way to go. You see this movement as a powerful, grassroots way to get the attention of the Israeli government and bring justice to the Palestinian people. Now what?

Do Your Research

There are many institutions that you can pressure to divest from Israel. Take some time to brainstorm and research different institutions' investment portfolios. The best place to start is with yourself. Do you personally have any investments in Israel? Review the stocks that are part of any mutual fund or company pension fund in which you invest. Then, look to your community and institutions to which you have a personal connection. Check out the following possibilities, and brainstorm more relevant targets:

- University endowments
- Labor unions
- Pension funds (such as a state teachers retirement system or city pension fund)
- Municipalities
- Insurance companies

Also consider directly pressuring companies that sell consumer products made in Israel or that invest in Israel. Talk to local stores to get them to de-shelve Israeli products. If the stores are not responsive, you may decide to boycott them to protest their complicity in supporting the Israeli government's oppression of the Palestinians, even indirectly.

Identify Your Targets

Thoroughly research different institutions' investment portfolios. Although it may not be readily available, public institutions can't hide this information from us. Call your city hall, visit your university's business office, surf the Internet, and do whatever research you can to choose the best target. Use the resources in this booklet to find out what investments you should be keeping an eye out for.

Make Decisions

Once you have identified potential targets and have gathered information, you can then decide what to divest from. This decision will depend on the institutions' holdings and your preferences or your group's preferences. Consider divesting from, or boycotting, the following:

- U.S. companies doing business in Israel (see: www.globalexchange.org/countries/palestine/usinvestments.html)
- Producers of military equipment for Israel (see: www.globalexchange.org/countries/palestine/arms.html)
- Israel Bonds
- Companies based in the settlements
- Consumer products from Israel
- Israeli academic institutions

Step 2: Coalition Building and Public Education

Building coalitions with other groups in your community is essential to any divestment campaign's success. Consider possible natural allies, and get them involved as soon as possible. It is essential that you have strong, broad coalition and public support before you go public with your divestment demands. Coalitions work best when everyone is involved from the beginning. Invite partner peace and justice groups, religious communities, professional organizations, student activists, and anyone else you can think of to join your divestment campaign.

Create a Divestment Petition

Think carefully about the goals of your campaign. Divestment seeks to pressure Israel to change its policies and abide by international law. What specifically does that mean? By creating a petition, you can quickly and clearly communicate your goals and enlist support. Use the petition to show whatever organization you are persuading to divest from Israel that you have support. The ultimate goal of your local campaign will be to have the organization pass a divestment resolution (see example in Step 4).

Sample Divestment Petition

The following petition, widely used in the university divestment movement, is from the University of California. Use this example to develop your own divestment petition suitable for you community and your goals.

We, the undersigned, are appalled by the human rights abuses against Palestinians at the hands of the Israeli government, the continual military occupation and colonization of Palestinian territory by Israeli armed forces and settlers, and the forcible eviction from and demolition of Palestinian homes, towns and cities. We find the recent attacks on Israeli civilians unacceptable and abhorrent. But these should not and do not negate the human rights of the Palestinian people.

As members of the University of California community, we believe that our university ought to use its influence—political and financial—to encourage the United States government and the government of Israel to respect the human rights of the Palestinian people. We therefore call on the US government to make military aid and arms sales to Israel conditional on immediate initiation and rapid progress in implementing the conditions listed below. We also call on the University of California to divest from Israel, and from US companies that sell arms to Israel, until these conditions are met:

- 1. Israel is in compliance with United Nations Resolution 242 which notes the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war, and which calls for withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from occupied territories.*
- 2. Israel is in compliance with the United Nations Committee Against Torture 2001 Report which recommends that Israel's use of legal torture be ended.*
- 3. In compliance with the Fourth Geneva Convention ("The occupying power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into territories it occupies;" Article 49, paragraph 6), Israel ceases building new settlements, and vacates existing settlements, in the Occupied Territories.*
- 4. Israel acknowledges in principle the applicability of United Nations Resolution 194 with respect to the rights of refugees, and accepts that refugees should either be allowed to return to their former lands or else be compensated for their losses, as agreed by the Palestinians and Israelis in bilateral negotiations.*

Organize a Divestment Teach-In

A teach-in is a powerful way to educate and activate members of your community. By offering qualified speakers of intellectual and/or experiential expertise, a teach-in provides a way to explore the issues surrounding divestment and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The best teach-ins are those that give a boost to your existing organizing efforts while also attracting new people to your campaign at the same time. A teach-in can also be an effective way to fundraise for your group.

Preliminary Steps—What to do before you start to organize the teach-in

- Select a speaker(s).

It is important to have an articulate and knowledgeable speaker, or a panel of speakers, at your teach-in. Local universities may have good speakers on the faculty, but don't overlook other community members. Consider activists who have traveled to Israel/Palestine and can share first hand experiences. You can also contact Global Exchange's Speaker's Bureau by phone at (415) 255-7296 ext 244 or by email at speakers@globalexchange.org. Some important factors to consider when choosing a speaker are reputation, availability, and cost.

- Select a topic.

There is a lot to talk about when it comes to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, so you need to narrow your focus. The topic you select will depend somewhat on the speaker you select. Do not feel compelled to begin with a chronological history of the conflict as this alone could easily fill several teach-ins. Consider a thematic approach instead, such as a comparison between White South African and Israeli apartheid. Think about tying your teach-in to a current event that is getting attention in the media. Whatever topic you choose, the goal should be to introduce divestment as a reasonable, just, and effective tool to help bring justice to the Palestinians and peace to all people.

- Think about your audience and outreach.

What are you trying to accomplish by bringing the speaker? Who do you want to attend the event? How will you conduct outreach? Do you plan on doing media outreach? What about meetings with local elected officials? Flyers, calendars, direct mail, email, phone calls, public service announcements, press releases, and word of mouth are all good ways to get people to the event. When considering all of these questions it is important to plan ahead.

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- Think about possible cosponsors.

Brainstorm and ask other members of your group for suggestions of other groups (student, community, religious, etc.) that may be willing to cosponsor the event with you. Keep in mind that cosponsors are a key component in generating an audience and sharing the workload and cost of organizing an event.

Plan the Event—The When, Where, Who, and How

- Select a date.

The date of your teach-in obviously depends on other factors, such as the availability of the speakers, availability of a venue, and whatever else is being planned in your community around the same time. Try not to have your teach-in coincide with other similarly themed teach-ins. Also, it is a good idea to organize an event around a date that has some significance in relation to divestment or Palestinian human rights.

- Find a venue.

The ideal venue is a free venue. Try to get space donated to you; churches, community centers, schools, and universities are likely to do so. Also, choose the size of the space based upon how many people you expect to attend the teach-in.

- Confirm your cosponsors.

There is no such thing as too much group participation or too much outreach. The point is to get as many people to the event as possible. Outside help will generate a larger audience. Contact the organizations you think would be interested in being part of the event. Explain to them that you are bringing a speaker for an event that you would like them to cosponsor. When they say “yes,” suggest that they help with outreach by inviting their members. Among other things, they may be able to help publicize the event by putting it on their web site or adding their name to a press release. Also, don’t be afraid to ask them for financial support. It costs money to host, transport, and feed speakers. Explain this to them. This is not too much to ask if the organization’s name is associated with the event as a cosponsor. In return, offer to include their name on any publicity materials that are produced.

- Be prepared for the opposition.

Unlike in other international human rights and social justice causes, there is an organized and vocal group in the United States opposing Palestinian freedom and self-determination. Opposition mainly stems from a misunderstanding of the nature of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In the United States, the Palestinian story under occupation has not been told nor humanized. Another part of the opposition comes from groups who oppose applying international norms to Israel as they are applied to any other state. Be prepared for individuals at your teach-in that come only to vocally oppose your campaign, and do your best to engage them in productive dialogue or help them learn something new.

Hold a Demonstration

Get the attention of your community and rally support for divestment by organizing a provocative, creative demonstration calling for divestment from Israel’s occupation. Refer to the “Organizing a Demonstration” section at the end of this guide for further help.

A **shop-in** is a particular type of demonstration used in the divestment movement. It is a non-confrontational demonstration best used when trying to encourage a local store to de-shelve Israeli products. Show the store that its customer base supports a boycott of Israeli products by organizing a special shopping day at the store. Distribute materials about divestment outside of the store and give out stickers that say, “I support a boycott” for shoppers to wear in the store. Preprint customer comment cards that shoppers can submit voicing their support of a boycott. Give shoppers stickers that say, “I support a boycott of Israeli products” to place on the back of their receipts. Then, have them submit these receipts in the customer comment box. Check out the sample shop-in flyer, customer comment cards, and stickers in this booklet.

Distribute Educational Materials

In any of the above activities, always have educational materials available for the public. Make copies of the brochures, flyers, and stickers at the back of this booklet to distribute. (Note that the sheet of stickers can be copied onto “Avery” brand labels, template 8164, 3-1/3" x 4")

Step 3—Building the Global Movement

Reaching the point where you will have decided on a target for your divestment campaign, built coalitions with other groups, educated the public about the Palestinian-Israeli situation, and empowered activists to join your divestment efforts will be a huge accomplishment. You will have learned so much from the process, and you will have much to share with other groups and grassroots activists in other communities across the country and around the world.

Connecting with other activists in the U.S. and abroad to share your experiences will be instrumental in sustaining your efforts and expanding the divestment movement.

Connect: Join Annual Divestment Conferences

In October 2002, the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor hosted The Second National Student Conference on the Palestine Solidarity Movement. For more information on the conference, visit the conference web site at www.divestmentconference.com.

There is a need to also bring together activists/groups who are working on community-level divestment in cities, pension funds, labor unions, retail boycotts, and other areas. Holding annual or regular conferences on divestment will allow you to:

- Connect with other groups and organizations with which you can share experiences.
- Get an update on divestment initiatives that you may know nothing about.
- Draw media attention to the conflict, to the human rights abuses against the Palestinians under occupation, and to why divestment is a growing movement.
- Organize nationally instead of only locally with other groups, expanding the quantity and quality of support.
- Prepare a national agenda based on previous accomplishments and current progress.

Share: Talk About Your Experience

- Post information online on your group's web site or create a web site where visitors can get information and receive updates on the progress of your campaign.
- Hold speaking events in local community centers, churches, and schools. Organize speaking tours in several cities or states to talk about your campaign and bring others aboard.
- Create an action guide sharing your campaign experiences and drawing on the lessons you learned in the process. Explain how you followed this guide's steps, highlighting strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations.
- Contact your local media regularly to bring attention to the campaign.

Step 4—Pass a Divestment Resolution

The culmination of your local campaign will be passing a divestment resolution. During the struggle against South African apartheid, local resolutions banning investment in the racist regime were key to eventually bringing down the government. Divest-from-Israel campaigns that target cities, such as the City of Seattle divestment campaign, hope to replicate the South African divestment success story. These campaigns require that the city council pass a resolution to divest city funds from Israel. The following guidelines will specifically help you to promote and pass a divestment resolution in your own town. Although these guidelines were created with city councils in mind, they can be modified for use in campaigns focusing on labor union boards, university boards of trustees, or any other body that would have to pass a resolution to authorize divestment.

Plan Your Campaign

- Determine what kind of resolution you want to pass. You can use the sample divestment resolution passed by Wayne State University's Student Council as a model for your campaign. Also review the Do Your Research—Define Your Targets section and the sample petitions to draft your resolution.
- Identify and reach out to supporters. Campaigns work best when they are anchored by a coalition of groups and individuals. Who else might be interested in helping to pass the resolution? What natural allies do you have in the community? Try to find coalition partners sooner rather than later. Coalitions work best when everyone is involved from the beginning.
- Determine who will work with you to pass the resolution and what their roles will be. As with any campaign effort—hosting a teach-in, organizing a demonstration, etc.—it is useful to make sure everyone knows their assigned tasks. When trying to pass a resolution, you probably want at least one person responsible for communicating with elected officials, at least one person responsible for working with the media, and at least one person responsible for putting together public education materials. Everyone should work on spreading the word to the general public.
- Plan a timeline for the resolution campaign. Make sure you know when, and how often, the city council meets and how long it typically takes for a resolution to be passed. In bigger cities, it may take months for a resolution to become law.

Find a Champion: Someone in Local Government to Introduce Your Resolution

- Identify a member of the city council who you think will be sympathetic towards the cause of divestment. This is essential. Without a government official who will actually take ownership of the issue and make it his or her cause, it will be difficult to successfully pass a resolution. You can identify likely champions by investigating officials' voting records and asking your coalition partners if they have any allies on the city council.
- Make contact with your champion. Find people who live in the official's district or ward and request a meeting with the representative. Once you arrange a meeting, try to organize as diverse a group as possible to represent your divestment coalition. By involving a wide range of coalition partners in the discussion, you demonstrate that divestment has community support. At the meeting, make a strong case for why the resolution is important and why the city should pass it.
- Get your champion to introduce the resolution to the council for a vote. When you meet with the elected official, you should present them with the text of the proposed resolution. This will make the official's job easier, and make them likelier to support your issue.
- Chart the political landscape. When meeting with your champion, ask them to predict which members of the city council are likely to support or oppose the resolution. Knowing your allies and opponents will help you in your campaign.

Work with City Staff

- Get to know the city staffers. In many city halls, especially those in small towns, the un-elected bureaucrats wield as much power as the elected representatives. That's because the staff are permanent and work full time, whereas the elected officials come and go and often work only part time. It's crucial, then, that you get the city staffers on your side. Ask for meetings with the city manager, the city attorney, the pension fund manager, the city purchaser, or whoever else may be affected by the proposed resolution. Explain to them why the resolution is important. If you gain their support, you are much closer to winning the campaign.

Educate the Public

- Spread the word. Without real public support, passing your resolution will be difficult. At the same time, one of the main reasons for working on a local resolution is to educate the public about the injustice perpetrated by the Israeli government against the Palestinian people. The resolution is, in a sense, a vehicle for educating the public. There are several ways you can do this.

- Try to get the media interested. Once your resolution is introduced and scheduled for a vote, contact the media and ask them to do a story about the campaign. Resolutions give local media a way to cover larger issues through a community angle. Write letters to the editor and op-eds in support of the resolution. Refer to the Using the Media section for more tips on media outreach.
- Host a public forum about the resolution. It may be a good idea to hold a teach-in or other educational event to talk to your fellow residents about the resolution. Organize a film screening about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Bring an inspiring speaker into the community to talk about why the resolution is important. Refer to the Public Education section for more ideas.

Lobby Other Elected Representatives

- Make contact with other officials. "Lobbying" is just a fancy word for letting your elected officials know how you feel about an issue. Communicating with your representatives is a right, not a privilege. You should make sure all of the representatives on the city council have a packet of information about your resolution. Try to get constituents from different districts to arrange meetings with the representatives to show support for the resolution.
- Expand the base of support. As the date of the vote approaches, make sure you are working with residents across the city and asking them to call or write their representatives in support of the resolution. Constituents throughout your town should be contacting their representatives on the city council. There are some ways to coordinate this. Organize a citywide "call-in" day during which people from every neighborhood will call their representatives in support of the resolution. If a particular representative is opposed to the resolution, do targeted outreach in that neighborhood.
- Cover all the bases. On the day your resolution is going to be voted on, make sure the city council chambers are filled with supporters of your resolution. Bring colorful and eye-catching signs to show support for the resolution. Encourage supporters to speak in favor of the resolution during the public comments section, and make sure you have a few people ready with prepared remarks. The day of the vote is your final chance to show that the community really does care about divestment.

For detailed advice on how to persuade your elected officials see the Global Exchange's Lobbying Toolkit.

Follow Up

Make sure that what the resolution calls for actually happens. This is crucial when it comes to binding resolutions. Keep in touch with your champion and city staff to ensure the resolution is being implemented. If it isn't, make sure all of your supporters, your champion, and the media hear about it.

Sample Divestment Resolution

The following divestment resolution was passed by the Student Council at Wayne State University in Michigan on April 17, 2003. Use the resolution as a model for your own divestment campaign.

“WHEREAS, the Student Council of Wayne State University has grave misgivings about financing violent ethnic cleansing, racially directed against millions of occupied Palestinian civilians, who are both innocent and helpless,

“WHEREAS, those millions of Palestinians suffer long-term malnutrition, are surrounded by Israeli army bulldozers, tanks, soldiers, and by jet bombers, all of which have killed thousands of occupied Palestinians,

“WHEREAS, on Sunday, March 16, 2003, an American college student, Rachel Corrie, was killed in plain sight, while dressed in bright orange, while waving, and while shouting at an Israeli Army bulldozer through a megaphone, by that same Israeli Army bulldozer, in the Occupied Gaza Strip,

“WHEREAS, that Israeli Army bulldozer ran her over twice,

“WHEREAS, South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu has urged us all to divest from Israel due to its violent and humiliating apartheid policies,

“WHEREAS, Israel was a longtime, close ally of White Apartheid South Africa,

“WHEREAS, the Wayne State University Board of Governors (“the Board”) has knowledge of University investments, including what governments our University is paying taxes to by means of investment, and has the authority to seek such information from its fund managers,

“THEREFORE IT IS RESOLVED, that we ask the Board to immediately divest (dis-invest) our university from Israel,

“THEREFORE IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED, that we ask the Board for a report this semester, on its progress in divesting the University from its investments in Israel, including divestment from all companies doing business in Israel, and divestment from all stocks and pension funds which include those companies.”

EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

On the following pages you will find flyers, brochures, and stickers you can use as part of your divestment campaign. In addition to the items presented here, you can download the following from our website: www.globalexchange.org/palestine/resources.html

- Israel Bonds—Investing in Inequality
- Shop-in Stickers
- Apartheid Wall brochure
- Reasons to Oppose U.S. Aid to Israel

ISRAEL BONDS: A BAD INVESTMENT

WHY WE SHOULD DIVEST FROM ISRAELI GOVERNMENT BONDS

Like the United States, Israel borrows money from the public by selling government bonds. A buyer purchases a bond for a fixed period of time during which interest accrues. When the bond matures, the buyer can either cash it in and receive her interest payments or reinvest in new bonds. Individuals, though, aren't the only ones buying Israel Bonds. There are approximately 9,500 pension funds, 3,500 banks, 1,500 labor unions, and 500 insurance companies in the United States that invest in Israel Bonds. School districts, municipalities, and other large institutions also purchase them. One of the largest sources of institutional investment capital in Israel is from U.S. pension funds through the purchase of Israeli government bonds. Here are just a few reasons why it's time to divest from Israel Bonds:

- Israel Bonds are a financially poor investment. The major credit rating services give Israel Bonds the sixth rating, classifying them as only an “upper medium investment.” In contrast, United States government bonds receive the highest rating. With a low rate of return and a bond rating lower than what would be accepted in other foreign government bonds, Israel bonds are a poor financial choice.
- Unlike most securities, Israel Bonds cannot be traded on the open market or easily converted into cash.
- Bond money goes directly into the Israeli treasury. The money is often used for infrastructure projects, such as highways, bridges, communications links, water projects, and port and airport expansion. This money is also used for the “development” of illegal settlements in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem.
- Within Israel, bond money is unfairly distributed. Infrastructure projects primarily benefit Jewish communities. Palestinian neighborhoods inside Israel are isolated and routinely discriminated against at every level. Israeli law dictates that Jewish-Israelis, who own 93% of Israeli land, may not sell land to Palestinian-Israelis. In addition, there is a tremendous disparity in the quality of public services, such as healthcare, education, and social services, that Palestinian and Jewish Israelis receive. Bond money funds Israel's apartheid system in both Israel and the occupied territories.
- Israel also uses bond money to resettle new immigrants from around the world, including the United States. Many of these immigrants are encouraged to move to Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza through economic incentives. At the same time, Israel bans millions of Palestinian refugees from returning home. Financially supporting Israel's immigration policy therefore perpetuates the displacement of the Palestinian people.

Copy these stickers onto "Avery" brand labels, template 8164, 3-1/3" x 4"

729

Barcode of
Oppression



729 =
Made in
Israel

Shop for Social Change



Boycott Israeli Products



www.BoycottIsraeliGoods.org



I'm a Loyal
Shopper
and
I Don't Buy
Israeli
Goods

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Boycott Israeli Products

Why call it the “Apartheid” Wall?

The following points will help you as you educate others about the wall:

- The wall will not be on the pre-1967 border established by the UN. It will annex 55% of some of the most fertile land in the West Bank. This is part of Israel’s systematic attempt to seize land, along with water and other natural resources, and integrate it into Israel while displacing the Palestinians already living on it.
- This wall is yet another form of apartheid, the Afrikaans word for “separation.” The Israeli Government’s ongoing policy of settlement building along with the construction of this massive physical barrier is reminiscent of the White South African Government’s creation of “Bantustans” to isolate Black South Africans.
- The wall will further disconnect parts of the West Bank from each other, depriving Palestinians of their livelihood by separating them from their agricultural Lands. The wall is enclosing Palestinians into ghettos based upon their ethnicity.
- The wall’s construction only affects Palestinians. Israeli settlers living in the Occupied Territories are not bound by the wall and will still be able to use the “Jewish-only” roads connecting the settlements with Israel.

“Jordan is Palestine. Us Here. Them There.”

This terrifying Israeli slogan echoes throughout Israel today. The implications of this statement are genocidal. It threatens massive expulsions from Israel and the occupied territories based upon ethnicity and religion. It denies the existence of Palestinians as a unique national group and rejects the possibility of a Palestinian state. The wall is a part of Israel’s increasingly violent denial of the Palestinians’ rights to self-determination and to exist on their land.

- The wall will not provide security for Israel nor give any autonomy to the Palestinians. Israel also used this argument to justify Israeli-only bypass roads, but the roads did not meet Israel’s security needs nor reduce Israel’s brutal military presence in the territories. Neither will the wall.

What You Can Do

- Start or join a divestment campaign on your campus or in your community. Petition your school, union, city, or pension fund to divest from companies doing business with Israel and to boycott Israeli government Bonds.
- Join a Global Exchange delegation to Palestine/Israel to learn firsthand about the effects of the wall and the occupation.
- Meet with, call, and write to your Congresspersons to demand that they pursue a balanced foreign policy in the Middle East: www.congress.org. Contact Global Exchange for a copy of the Lobbying Toolkit or to schedule a lobby training in your community.
- Contact Global Exchange’s Speakers Bureau to find out about upcoming events or to host a speaker in your community: speakers@globalexchange.org
- Donate to Global Exchange! Contributions are tax-deductible.

Resources

PENCON—The Palestinian Environmental NGOs Network: www.pengon.org

LAW—The Palestinian Society for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment: www.lawsociety.org

G L O B A L E X C H A N G E

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Israel’s Apartheid Wall



Proposed Dimensions of the Wall/Fence

- 445 miles long
- 95-315 feet of buffer zone with electric fences, trenches, cameras, and security patrols
- Seven times as long and twice as high as the Berlin Wall

The Berlin Wall: 1961-1990



G L O B A L E X C H A N G E

building people-to-people ties

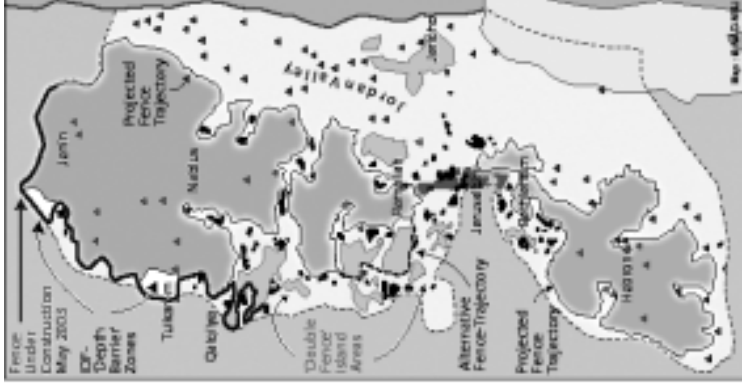
The Story of the Wall

In June 2002 the Israeli government set forth a new plan to entrench itself in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), imprison and displace hundreds of thousands of Palestinian civilians, and permanently annex much of the West Bank into Israel. Soon after, Israel set the plan in motion and began construction on a massive network of concrete walls, electric fences, trenches, guard towers, cameras and security patrols that encircle the West Bank and will forever separate it from Israel.

The wall is both symbolically and literally devastating to the Palestinian people. Made of concrete in some regions and elaborate, multi-layered electric fencing and trenches in others, the wall will be 225 miles long on the western side and an additional 220 miles are proposed for the eastern side—totaling seven times the length of the Berlin Wall when completed. It is a physical manifestation of the apartheid division Israel has created between Palestinian and Israeli, Jew and non-Jew. It represents the unequal rights of Jews and Palestinians, both in Israel and the OPT, living under Israeli rule.

But the wall has ruined the lives of Palestinians in very tangible ways as well. Contrary to popular belief, the wall is not being constructed along the “Green Line,” the pre-1967 border established by the UN. The wall will actually cut deep into Palestinian territory, arbitrarily annexing 55% of the West Bank, including the 400,000 Palestinians residing there. Of these, 14,000 Palestinians in 17 villages in the north will be caught between the wall and Israel’s border, imprisoned in a “closed military zone.” They will need permits to enter the rest of the West Bank and to pass through military checkpoints located every nine miles within the zone. Although effectively becoming part of Israel, they will not be granted Israeli citizenship.

The eastern portion of the fence is currently under construction and will span 225 miles. Together with the proposed western portion, the barrier will effectively annex 55% of the West Bank into Israel.



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The effects of the wall are often more subtle. Israel will also annex the aquifer underneath Qalqilya, which contains 51% of the West Bank’s water resources, and some villages will lose their only source of water. Furthermore, Israel has bulldozed dozens of homes, uprooted 83,000 trees, demolished 35,000 meters of irrigation pipelines and destroyed 11,400 acres of agricultural land to create a buffer zone on either side of the wall. Such actions are destroying the fabric of Palestinian society.

Building the wall is a blatant attempt by Israel to unilaterally draw a permanent border within the occupied territories, seize water resources and agricultural land, and incorporate dozens of Israeli settlements into Israel proper. This wall will forever scar the landscape of Palestine and continue to bring the chilling policy of ethnic apartheid into the Palestinian reality, making future negotiations even more difficult to undertake.

Bethlehem: Victim of the Apartheid Fence

Hanna Nasser, mayor of Bethlehem, was born in a large stone house on Bethlehem’s main road in 1936. The home and its adjacent acre of olive groves have been in Nasser’s family since 1910. Now, though, the family homestead will be separated from the rest of Bethlehem by Israel’s new barrier. Nasser will now have to obtain a permit to make the short trip between his house across town and the old family home. And this is the city in which he was born and raised and that he now governs!

Israel insists that the fence is needed to protect Jewish pilgrims making their way to Rachel’s Tomb, a site holy for Christians, Muslims, and Jews alike. Although no one has been hurt while visiting the tomb, Israel claims that the Palestinians have failed to safeguard the site. Israel seized the tomb and its access road in 2000 and will maintain control with the barrier. While once a popular tourist destination, the tomb now has only a few Jewish visitors; Israel has unilaterally banned Muslim and Christian visitors.

The fence will also uproot 400 olive trees, demolish several Palestinian businesses and over a dozen homes, and seize an Islamic cemetery and property belonging to the Armenian Church. Bethlehem will be changed forever.

Bethlehem’s residents are already feeling the effects of Israel’s tightening grip. Businesses are failing and the once vibrant downtown is now quiet. When construction on the fence is finished, Bethlehem will be a divided and crippled city.

“This is the entrance to the city where Jesus was born,” Mayor Nasser reminds us. “These walls will never make for good neighbors. This is a mad project.”

Find out more—get involved
www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/palestine

REASONS TO OPPOSE US AID TO ISRAEL

United States diplomats like to say that when it comes to the conflict between Israel and Palestinians the US plays the role of “an honest broker.” But the US’ massive financial and military support for Israel means that, in fact, the US is taking sides. Israel is the largest recipient of US foreign aid, receiving more than \$3 billion annually—or about \$8 million every day. If a level diplomatic playing field is to be created, the US’ unfair and biased support of Israel must end. Until the US stops lending its weight to Israel, a truly just peace will remain elusive.

Israel Is Illegally Occupying Palestinian Land

After Israel invaded East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza in June of 1967, the United Nations Security Council (including the US) passed Resolution 242, which calls for “withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict” and emphasizes the “inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war.”¹ In violation of UNSC 242, Israel’s army has never left and to this day remains an illegal and oppressive presence in someone else’s land.

Just weeks after the invasion, Israel began demolishing Arab homes in illegally annexed East Jerusalem. By the end of June 1967, 4000 families had lost their homes and land.² This action should dispel the myth that Israel’s intentions in 1967 were strictly defensive. Israel uses the self-defense argument to cover up the expansion of its territories, to justify human rights abuses since the occupation began, and to collect massive aid from the US.

Israel Systematically Violates the Human Rights of Palestinians

Over three million Palestinians³ in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza live every day of their life under the domination of a hostile, foreign occupying army. Countless international, Israeli and Palestinian human rights organizations—and even the US government—have published reports citing Israel’s consistent human rights violations as defined by the 4th Geneva Convention, which Israel itself has signed. This Convention applies to Palestinian land occupied during time of war.

According to Amnesty International, Israel has “committed grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions . . . and consistently uses closures, curfews, and demolitions of homes as a form of collective punishment.”⁴

The Israeli human rights group B’Tselem reports that Israel’s occupation army has “fired at ambulances and prevented medical treatment to the sick and wounded even leaving some of them in the field where they bled to death.”⁵ US aid supports this kind of brutality.

US Aid to Israel Violates the US’s Own Laws

The US Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) and the US Arms Export Control Act (AECA) strictly forbid the government from giving military assistance to any country that violates internationally recognized human rights.⁶ The State Department’s 2001 human rights report states:

“Israeli security units often used excessive force against Palestinian demonstrators including live fire . . . impeded the provision of medical assistance to Palestinian civilians by their strict enforcement of internal closures, which reportedly contributed to at least 32 deaths. Israeli security forces harassed and abused Palestinian pedestrians and drivers who were attempting to pass through the more than 130 Israeli-controlled checkpoints . . .”⁷

Under the AECA, “the President is required to report to Congress promptly upon the receipt of information that a substantial violation of AECA may have occurred.”⁸ The US government is fully aware of the Israeli army’s human rights violations, as the above quote from the State Department shows. The US government has eroded its own credibility as an impartial mediator by continuing to arm Israel without restriction and allowing these weapons to be used against civilian populations in violation of US law.

US Support for Israel's Military Threatens US Security and Global Stability

US funding of Israel's human rights abuses fuels resentment towards the US throughout the world. The US sends massive military aid to Israel then looks the other way. At the same time, the US bombs the Iraqi people and embargoes humanitarian aid in response to the actions of their un-elected dictator. Such inconsistent policies are hypocritical and provoke anti-US sentiment, ultimately jeopardizing the safety of people living in the US. Ending aid to Israel will show the world that the US truly respects human rights. The US can ensure its own security by gaining the trust and respect of the international community.

US military aid to Israel also destabilizes the political climate in other troubled areas of the world. In 2001, Israel made \$2 billion in arms sales to India, including Israeli missile systems that were developed with US tax dollars.⁹ Tensions are as high as ever between Pakistan and India. Contributing to an arms race between the two nations will only bring South Asia closer to war.

Israeli Settlements Are Illegal and Provocative

One of Israel's most egregious violations of the 4th Geneva Convention is the construction of massive settlements in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza. The terms of the Convention couldn't be clearer: "The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies."¹⁰ The Israeli government is essentially colonizing the Occupied Territories.

More than 350,000 illegal settlers have built approximately 150 settlements on confiscated Palestinian land.¹¹ And the number is growing. Since 2001, 34 new settlements have been established.¹² In addition, Jewish-only bypass roads that connect settlements to each other and to Israel have carved up Palestine into disconnected islands, making establishment of a viable Palestinian state impossible. The army and settlers also confiscate scarce natural resources from the region. "Israeli Jewish settlers are allocated 4.5 times more water, per capita, for agricultural and personal use," than the occupied Palestinians themselves, according to Peace Now.¹³ Is this self-defense or expansionism?

US Aid to Israel Does Not Make Israelis Safer

Billions of US taxpayer dollars are delivered to Israel each year, ostensibly to make Israel secure. With these funds, Israel has built one of the strongest militaries in the world in order to maintain an illegal occupation and expand its borders. This brutal occupation is at the root of the violence against the occupier's own civilian population. No amount of US aid can stop this violence. In fact, supporting the collective punishment and captivity of Palestinians will only lead to more bloodshed for Israelis and Palestinians alike. Security and peace for Israelis depends on Israel taking its troops and settlers back into its own country and out of someone else's land.

Israel Is an Exclusionary State

The Israeli Law of Return allows Jews from all over the world to immigrate to Israel and gain citizenship, but indigenous Palestinians who were forced to flee in 1948 and 1967 are excluded from returning to their homes and towns of origin.¹⁴ Many Palestinian refugees still hold the land deed and even the key to their homes. Palestinian citizens of Israel, who make up 20 percent of the population, suffer state-sanctioned discrimination. The US State Department reports: "The [Israeli] government made little headway in reducing institutional, legal, and societal discrimination against Israel's Arab citizens, [who] do not share fully the rights provided to, and obligations imposed on, the country's Jewish citizens."¹⁵

For example, according to the Nazareth-based Arab Association for Human Rights, "the National Planning and Building Law (1965) retroactively rezoned the lands on which many Arab villages sit as 'nonresidential.' ... The authorities use a combination of house demolitions, land confiscation, denial of basic services, and restrictions on infrastructure development to dislodge residents from these villages."¹⁶

Israel's official policy of discriminating against non-Jewish citizens makes the country a kind of "Jim Crow democracy," and not one the US should be supporting.

For more information about Global Exchange's Palestine Human Rights Campaign call 800-497-1994 or write to palestine@globalexchange.org. Complete citations and sources available at www.globalexchange.org/palestine.