



BDS: THE ATTEMPT TO STRANGLE ISRAEL

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Those who hate the free and democratic state of Israel have dreamed up yet another way to destroy it. It has an innocuous name, but not an innocuous purpose. It's called the BDS Movement. The initials stand for Boycott, Divest, and Sanction.

Created by Palestinian academics, it calls on individuals, on companies, on colleges, churches, cities, and even countries to starve Israel economically and isolate it socially. The ostensible reason for this is Israel's alleged mistreatment of Palestinians living in the areas of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

Now, I support the idea of the creation of a Palestinian State. Actually, so do most Israelis. And I am not particularly supportive of the West Bank settlement policy of the Israeli government. But I condemn the BDS Movement in the strongest possible terms. Anyone who has any interest in creating a climate for peace in the Middle East should also condemn the BDS Movement as should anyone who simply understands the immorality of singling out Israel, of all the world's countries, for economic strangulation.

Here's why.

First, the BDS Movement ignores historical reality. You don't have to delve too deeply into late twentieth century history to learn that Israel gained control over the West Bank only after it had been attacked by Jordan in the 1967 Six Day War.

No attack by Jordan -- no Israel in the West Bank. It's as simple as that. Furthermore, Israel, on at least two separate occasions, mostly recently in both 2000 and 2008, has tried to give almost all of the land it acquired in 1967 in the West Bank back to the Palestinians. It is the Palestinians who have rejected each of these offers. In other words, there is no need for the BDS Movement, since Israel wants to give the Palestinians their own country. Israel only asks that it be able to live in peace in return.

Second, the BDS Movement ignores current reality. Israel is one of the freest countries in the world and by far the freest in the Middle East, an area where there is precious little freedom. In a world full of human rights violators of the most blatant kind why would you want to boycott a country that has a boisterous free press, is a model of women's and gay rights, and whose Arab citizens, one fifth of the country, are the freest in the Arab World? Let me repeat: the Arab citizens of Israel, who make up one fifth of Israel's population, are freer than all Arabs living in Arab countries around the world.

Now, the common sense principle of human rights is deal with "the worst first." By this

principle there should be a BDS Movement against North Korea, against Syria, against Sudan or a dozen other countries. Israel wouldn't even make the list. Of course Israel has flaws. But, like all vibrant democracies with regular elections and functioning courts of law, it makes a constant effort to correct them. Let's not forget that Israel did not build a security fence on the border of the West Bank or establish check points because it wanted to keep hard working Palestinians out of Israel. It did these things because it wanted to keep terrorists out of Israel after enduring years of horrific suicide bombings following the peace talks that the Palestinians rejected in 2000.

Third, the BDS Movement makes peace much less likely. Why? Because the Palestinians, if they believe that the BDS Movement can strangle Israel economically and make it an international pariah, why should they ever negotiate? Why not just wait until Israel has no choice but to capitulate.

But the BDS Movement doesn't just hurt Israel. It hurts everyone. Israeli scientists and engineers are leading innovators in the fields of medical technology, in the fields of renewable energy, water conservation. The BDS Movement wants to keep these scientists as well as Israeli historians, and other academics from sharing their innovations and their knowledge and their insights with the world. With you. But the BDS activists don't care about helping the world. They care about hurting Israel.

This leads to one final issue that has to be confronted: the motives of the people behind the BDS Movement. Here those tempted to support this movement must be very careful. The leaders of the BDS Movement have no interest in a two-state solution. They reject the concept of Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people. The BDS Movement deliberately fools people. It claims to be opposed only to Israel's settlement policy when, in fact, it's opposed to Israel's very existence.

You may have sympathy for the Palestinians and wish to help them. I share that sympathy. But by aligning yourself with the BDS Movement, you are aligning yourself with people who don't want to see both sides thrive. They want to see one side, Israel, destroyed. They don't merely want to see a change in policy, they want to see an end to the nation state of the Jewish people.

Do you want to spend your time and moral energy supporting such a cause? For decent people, the answer is no.

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