BDS: exposing the contradications of Zionism

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By exposing Zionism’s anti-democratic contradictions to the world, the BDS movement is strengthening international solidarity for a just peace in Palestine.

The relentless continuation of the Zionist regime as well as imperialist entities’ support for its policies of colonization, ethnic cleansing and apartheid have led to a paralysis of the very political negotiation process that they themselves initiated with the Oslo Accords. Since the beginning of the Oslo process, developments on the ground only relate to Zionist colonization of the West Bank and East Jerusalem – a process that prefers to deepen apartheid before formally annexing occupied Palestinian territory.

Zionist policies, however, have not progressed without obstacles and contradictions. The main obstacle to the advancement of Zionism is the heroic daily resistance of the Palestinians, manifested in the recent “youth intifada.” On the other hand, the Oslo process has rendered its child – the Palestinian Authority (PA) – a zombie and destroyed the two state solution as a relevant response to the 1967 occupation. Yet, international support for both the PA and two state solution continues.

The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS) is a reaction to this post-Oslo reality. BDS strengthens resistance to Zionism and also unearths its contradictions. The main achievement of the BDS movement has been the invigoration of discussion on the colonial nature of Zionism. This discussion, which has become commonplace in many social sectors throughout the world, focuses on characterizing Zionism as an apartheid regime and questioning its legitimacy. The death of Oslo has also pushed social sectors critical of Israel’s occupation to adopt BDS as a strategy of international pressure and thus sever their ties with Zionism. The BDS movement is increasingly hegemonic in the global movement for solidarity and a just peace in Palestine.

In the past decade, this bottom-up movement has moved from the margins of society and emerged as the biggest strategic threat to the Zionist regime. The BDS campaign has strengthened its international position in the global South, Latin America, Africa and the Mediterranean Basin. Not a week goes by without a new boycott success in economic, academic or cultural fields. Decisions like these to divest from Israel occur both for ethical reasons and for the simple calculation of financial gains in Israel versus potential setbacks in public image. For example, in the Spanish state, more than 50 local councils and regional parliaments have declared themselves to be free of Israeli apartheid in less than a year. Large sectors of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) movement in many parts of the world have also become increasingly aware of and against pinkwashing.

Israel and its Zionist allies’ richly resourced counter-offensive are focusing on developing anti-boycott legislation to criminalize BDS. These moves not only fail to contain the spread of BDS, but reveal new contradictions by clarifying the anti-democratic nature of Zionism, exposing its allies, and invigorating social democracy. Consequently, attempts to criminalize BDS only prove the legitimacy of BDS as a strategy of nonviolent struggle against the occupation and its continued violation of international law.

So, the progress of BDS poses new challenges and strategic dilemmas. The goal is still to end the exceptionalism afforded to as well as global tolerance of Israel’s international law violations. Zionism instrumentalizes the memory of the Holocaust as a tool to legitimize war crimes. We still have a long way to go towards establishing the contradiction between Zionism and the struggle against fascism and discrimination as common sense. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to illuminate Israel’s role in and profiteering off of the chaos in the Middle East as well as the rising phenomenon of Islamophobia across the globe.

We must expose the fallacy of partition and the two-state solution – a mirage that still guides the international and institutional actions of numerous social democratic and progressive sectors. Reality must motivate such groups to adopt BDS as the most effective strategy of solidarity against the occupation. This will allow for colonial partition to be replaced with a society in which all people are treated equally.

Finally, the BDS movement has not only made strides internationally, but also in Palestine itself. This has resulted in a unitary movement that can overcome the impasse of the PA. Ultimately, the success of the BDS movement both in Palestine and abroad has demonstrated that the occupation, colonization and violation of Palestinian rights carries a material and symbolic cost for both Palestinian and Israeli societies.

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