



Israel Imposes Travel Ban on BDS Co-Founder, Steps up anti-BDS Repression

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Israel has officially refused to renew the travel document of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement co-founder Omar Barghouti in a move that amounts to a travel ban and is an escalation of its attacks on Palestinian human rights defenders who nonviolently advocate for Palestinian rights under international law.

Barghouti, who lives with his family in Acre, has Israeli permanent residency and requires an Israeli travel document to be able to travel in and out of Palestine/Israel. His immediate reaction was: "I am unnerved but certainly undeterred by these threats. Nothing will stop me from struggling for my people's freedom, justice and peace".

Israel's decision not to grant a renewal of the travel document on baseless bureaucratic pretences is being viewed by human rights experts as the first step towards revoking Barghouti's permanent residency.

Israeli Interior Minister Aryeh Deri had threatened as much at a recent anti-BDS conference held in Jerusalem when he disclosed that he was "inclined to fulfill" a request he had received from a far-right Israeli member of parliament to revoke Barghouti's permanent residency.

The travel ban follows thinly-veiled incitement to physical violence against Barghouti and BDS activists by Israeli Intelligence Minister Yisrael Katz and Minister of Strategic Affairs Gilad Erdan. Katz called on Israel to engage in "targeted civil eliminations" of BDS leaders, while Erdan described BDS activists and leaders as threats and called for them to "pay the price" for their work, following this with a clarification that he does not mean "physical harm". Defending "campaigns to hold Israel accountable for human rights and other international law violations", Amnesty International has [expressed its concern](#) for "the safety and liberty of Palestinian human rights defender Omar Barghouti" following these threats, "including of physical harm and deprivation of basic rights".

As a leading volunteer with the BDS movement, Barghouti regularly travels internationally to raise awareness about Israel's violations of Palestinian human rights and to advocate for BDS as an effective strategy to end Israel's regime of occupation and apartheid. Rooted in a long heritage of Palestinian popular resistance, BDS is also inspired by the global boycott movement that helped to end South Africa's apartheid regime and by the U.S. Civil Rights Movement.

The [Palestinian Human Rights Organizations Council](#) has recently affirmed "the right of all

individuals to participate in and advocate for boycott, divestment, and sanction actions”, calling on states and businesses to “uphold their related legal responsibilities”.

Mahmoud Nawajaa, the general coordinator of the Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC), the broadest coalition in Palestinian civil society that leads the global BDS movement, said:

“Having failed to stop the growth of BDS in the mainstream, Israel is now launching a desperate and dangerous global war of repression on the movement. After losing many battles for the hearts and minds at the grassroots level, Israel and its well-oiled lobby groups are pressuring western states to implement patently anti-democratic measures that threaten civil liberties at large”.

“By banning our colleague Omar Barghouti from travelling and threatening him with physical violence, Israel is showing the lengths it will go to in order to stop the spread of the non-violent BDS movement for Palestinian freedom, justice and equality”.

The international BDS movement aims to pressure Israel, as South African apartheid was pressured, to comply with international law. It has attracted the support of mainstream unions, churches and political parties across the world and compelled large corporations, including Veolia and Orange, to end their involvement in Israel’s human rights violations.

Prominent artists including Ms. Lauryn Hill and Roger Waters have refused to perform in Tel Aviv; several academic associations in the U.S. and thousands of academics in Europe, South Africa, North America and Latin America have endorsed a comprehensive boycott of Israeli universities. The authors of a recent UN report said that a [46% drop in foreign direct investment](#) in Israel in 2014 was partly due to the impact of BDS.



At Israel’s [request](#), governments in the UK, France, Canada and state legislatures in the U.S. are introducing anti-BDS legislation and taking other anti-democratic measures to repress BDS activism. In France, one activist was [arrested](#) simply for wearing a BDS t-shirt.

Israel is also using its security services to spy on BDS activists across the world, as repeatedly reported in the Israeli media and by the [Associated Press](#). This espionage is likely to involve monitoring of citizens’ communications in violation of domestic laws.

Journalist and constitutional lawyer Glenn Greenwald, known for breaking the NSA

surveillance story, has [described](#) this well-orchestrated series of draconian measures against the BDS movement as the “greatest threat to free speech in the West”.

Mahmoud Nawajaa added:

“The western governments that are repressing BDS activism at home are giving Israel a green light to continue its violations of international law with impunity. We urge governments, parliaments and human rights organisations to follow Amnesty International’s lead and uphold his rights as a human rights defender under threat”.

Find out more about Israel’s attacks on the BDS movement [here](#).

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