

Israeli boycotts: gesture politics or a moral imperative?

Saturday April 21, 2007

[The Guardian](#)

You suggest that, in voting to boycott Israel, the (U.K.) National Union of Journalists (NUJ) has strayed too far from its legitimate business. We do not think such arguments apply to our grave concerns as doctors about the health-related impact of Israeli policy on Palestinian society. Persistent violations of medical ethics have accompanied Israel's occupation. The Israeli Defence Force has systematically flouted the fourth Geneva convention guaranteeing a civilian population unfettered access to medical services and immunity for medical staff. Ambulances are fired on (hundreds of cases) and their personnel killed. Desperately ill people, and newborn babies, die at checkpoints because soldiers bar the way to hospital. The public-health infrastructure, including water and electricity supplies, is wilfully bombed, and the passage of essential medicines like anti-cancer drugs and kidney dialysis fluids blocked. In the West Bank, the apartheid wall has destroyed any coherence in the primary health system. UN rapporteurs have described Gaza as a humanitarian catastrophe, with 25% of children clinically malnourished.

The Israeli Medical Association has a duty to protest about war crimes of this kind, but has refused to do so. Appeals to the World Medical Association and the British Medical Association have also been rebuffed. Eighteen leading Palestinian health organisations have appealed to fellow professionals abroad to recognise how the IMA has forfeited its right to membership of the international medical community. We are calling for a boycott of the Israeli Medical Association and its expulsion from the WMA. There is a precedent for this: the expulsion of the Medical Association of South Africa during the apartheid era. A boycott is an ethical and moral imperative when conventional channels do not function, for otherwise we are merely turning away.

Dr Derek Summerfield, Professor Colin Green, Dr Ghada Karmi, Dr David Halpin, Dr Pauline Cutting And 125 other doctors

NUJ votes to boycott Israeli goods

Stephen Brook

Friday April 13, 2007

MediaGuardian.co.uk

The National Union of Journalists has voted at its annual meeting for a boycott of Israeli goods as part of a protest against last year's war in Lebanon.



Jeremy Dear: general secretary of the NUJ. Photo Stefano Cagnoni

Today's vote was carried 66 to 54 - a result that met with gasps and a small amount of applause from the union delegates present.

The vote came during a series of motions on international affairs and reads: "This ADM [annual delegate meeting] calls for a boycott of Israeli goods similar to those boycotts in the struggles against apartheid South Africa led by trade unions and the TUC [Trades Union Congress] to demand sanctions be imposed on Israel by the British government and the

United Nations."

The motion was originally brought by the union's South Yorkshire branch and opposed by the Cumberland branch, which said it was too political and was not tied closely enough to journalistic matters.

After a show of hands twice failed to give a clear result, union scrutineers were called in and the doors to the conference room closed.

The vote on the motion was taken after it was split from a larger motion that condemned the "savage, pre-planned attack on Lebanon by Israel" last year.

This motion, known as Composite B in Order Paper 4, was carried by a large majority and also condemned the "slaughter of civilians by Israeli troops in Gaza and the IDF's [Israeli Defense Forces] continued attacks inside Lebanon following the defeat of its army by Hezbollah".

The motion called for the end of Israeli aggression in Gaza and other occupied territories.

The union's national executive committee has been instructed to support organisations including the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign, Jews for Justice for Palestinians and the Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding.

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Apartheid and boycotts in the Middle East

We welcome the courageous decision of the National Union of Journalists to boycott Israeli goods (Letters, April 23). Given Israel's contempt for international law, with the complicity of the US and UK governments, pressure has to be increased by civil society if justice is to be achieved. A boycott of Israeli goods is a legitimate form of grassroots action and is particularly appropriate as Israel is destroying the Palestinian economy. Such a boycott has been called for by Israeli peace organisations.

As a result of its illegal occupation, Israel is able to flood the Palestinian market with its products, while preventing Palestinian farmers from growing and trading their own. We believe Israel's actions betray Jewish ethical traditions - the cutting down of olive and fruit trees is prohibited by Jewish law. The continuing occupation and exploitation of Palestinian land is a major obstacle to peace for Israelis and Arabs alike which has global implications for world peace.

Deborah Fink, Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi, Mike Cushman, Sylvia Finzi, Tony Greenstein, Ruth Tenne, Deborah Maccoby, Prof Moshe Machover, Mike Marqusee, Jews for Boycotting Israel Goods.

Justification for boycott of Israel

Monday April 23, 2007

[The Guardian](#)

In your leader disapproving of the NUJ resolution urging a boycott of Israeli goods (Neither balanced nor fair, April 20), you do not deny its central and devastating charge: Israel's "savage pre-planned attack on Lebanon". Is it exceptionalist (or anti-semitic?) to regard that naked aggression as appalling and to be publicly condemned in any way one can? Perhaps we can now do without the whining mantra that Hizbullah "started it". There is the newer whine that Hizbullah is being rearmed by Iran; are we to believe that Israel has not thoroughly rearmed, aided by the US, with British companies in support? How will the next atrocious war on Lebanon be blamed on the other side? Or is it just possible that Israel will respect the UN on the border?

Judith Kazantzis

Lewes, East Sussex

The Guardian's position in its leader on the NUJ's annual delegate meeting requires challenging. You claim the NUJ should only take a stand on unsavoury actions when these concern journalism and that it should only do so if it does so against all other states guilty of similar actions. Both claims were regularly trotted out during the anti-apartheid struggle. The first is a non-sequitur, the second a sure recipe for never taking action against any unsavoury regime. The reality is that Israel, like apartheid South Africa, is particularly vulnerable to sanctions by the west and that despite acting towards the Arabs in Palestine as did Europeans towards Africans under apartheid, the west has yet to take action against it. Why not?

Walter Hain

London